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A GIRL NAMED
MARY

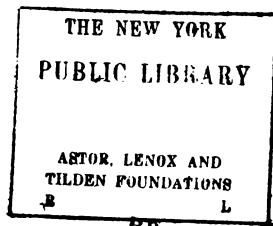
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A GIRL NAMED MARY





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"It may be romantic to marry on two thousand."

Good Mary

WILBOR TOMPEINS

Author of

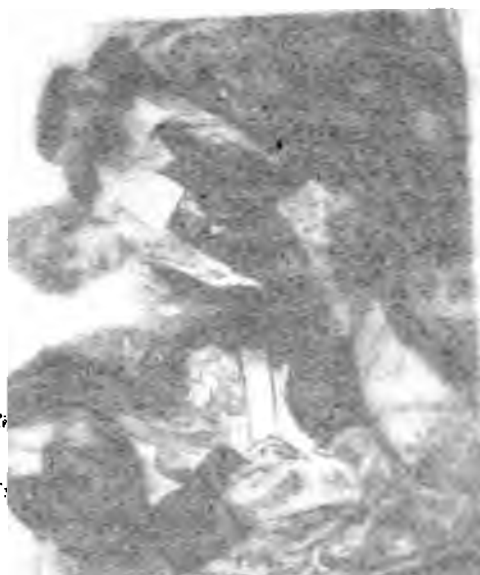
THE NEED OF THE RIGHTEOUS
THE SIGN OF THE CROSS OF THE
CROSS

With Illustrations by

FREDERICK GRUBER



INDIANAPOLIS
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PUBLISHERS



A Girl Named Mary

By

JULIET WILBOR TOMPKINS

Author of

**THE SEED OF THE RIGHTEOUS
AT THE SIGN OF THE OLDEST HOUSE
ETC.**

With Illustrations by

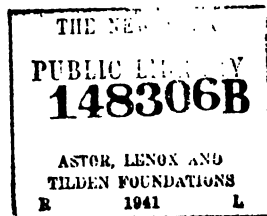
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A GIRL NAMED MARY

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A GIRL NAMED MARY

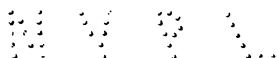
I

SHE came homing through the wintry blackness, head and shoulders pressing ahead of her steps, her eyes fixed above the dark crowds and the trodden snow on the warmth and shelter and beauty waiting to take her in. The massed shoulders pressed aside to let her through, dirty hands holding out their "Lady, for the love of God—" fell away before the sure aim of her purpose and her oblivion of all else. She went like one who has earned her right to oblivion, acknowledging only the wind. It was heavy with sleet, but she breathed it eagerly, taking it down like a purification for body and spirit. She was turning from the crowds and the slime to the more serene streets, where the snow was still white, when voices spoke at her elbow.

"Well, so long, Mary!"

"So long!" was called back.

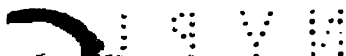
As though the summoning word had been



spoken, the oblivious spirit sprang to attention. The one they had called Mary was disappearing into the crowds behind, but could still be overtaken. Swiftly and adroitly she followed, keeping the red cap in sight until a delay at a crossing allowed her to get a step ahead and look, as though by chance, into a girl's face, lifted heartily to the storm. The corner lights showed it broad and ruddy, with big, foreign, black eyes. Then the crowd flowed between, bearing them in opposite directions; but the older woman walked slowly now, as though very tired, and her eyes searched the passing faces with an air of old habit.

"Mrs. Jaffrey will be down directly," said Hannah in the tone of patient acceptance she kept for such guests, and, lifting a portière of heavy black and gold silk, she motioned them into a big and beautiful room, flushed with fire-light.

The two girls took the extreme edges of their chairs, but, for all their rigid decorum, they were secretly examining the room as any primitive creature examines a new locality before trusting it sufficiently to relax. Little sniffing noses could not have gauged more thoroughly



the substance and value of the dull blacks and dim golds and aged oak, deeply carved, of their surroundings. The room had been built for an ample and luxurious studio, expanding to vast heights, the rest of the apartment being in two stories. Behind the tea table a tall black iron standard upheld a dozen yellow candles in a vaulted row, and the light fell softeningly on the young faces, tempering commonness and bringing out any hidden beauty. One girl was small and eager, the other big and handsome and sullen. The latter spoke first.

"Say, Minnie, let's get out. I don't know what you brought me here for."

"Aw, Mame, just wait till you see Mrs. Jafrey," the other pleaded. "She's so grand and lovely—"

"If she tries to come any adopted mother business on me—"

"She won't," Minnie insisted. "That's just exactly it. She'll be perfectly sweet and friendly, but she don't want to cry over you. She wants to find you a job. Look what she done for me!"

Mame glanced about the big room, her scowl deepening. "What does she do it for? What's there in it for her?"

"Well, you know about her own kid."

"The long lost che-ild," the other interpreted, with a yawn. "I guess that's her picture."

Both turned to an enlarged and tinted photograph that hung beside the chimney. It showed a fair and plump little girl of about two, brown haired and gray eyed, rather a typical, generalized little girl, unless the camera had missed her characterizing traits.

"How did it get lost, anyhow?" Mame asked impatiently.

"Search me. It was before my day. But if your name's Mary, you've got a cinch with Mrs. Jaffrey. Of course, she's nice to any girl—"

"Sh!" warned Mame, as a shadow crossed the curtained opening above a carved balcony that hung half-way up the wall. They were breathlessly silent as quick heels tapped down the stairs and a graceful woman hurried in, fastening a hook at her sleeve, laughing and apologizing.

"I am so sorry! Please forgive me for being late!" She shook hands, adding an extra clasp of her left hand for good measure. "I always am, though I try so hard. It's my Irish grandmother. Perhaps you have Irish grandmoth-

ers?" she appealed, turning her lighted face from one to the other.

Minnie admitted it, beaming, but Mame sat dark and unresponsive. Questions brought out only the baldest answers. She had come, but she was not going to let herself be overwhelmed by a fine lady in floating chiffon of embroidered blues and greens, whose hands, moving among the Dresden cups and the old English silver of the tea table, looked as though they had never known rougher contacts.

But Mrs. Jaffrey knew her business. Even Mame had at last to open to her, she was so intelligent, so alive, so whole-heartedly free from any taint of patronage. Her great reason for wanting to come close to them burnt like a white flame back of her every word and look. They could not know how she was spending herself; they saw her as always like this, brimming with some sparkling quality that went to their heads and hearts. When, after unlimited tea and sandwiches, cinnamon toast and cake, they rose to go, she had all she needed of Mame's story, and plans were laid for Mame's future. As she put down the name and address in a book that held many such names, a shadow

crossed her face. It left her older; if they had looked up then, they would have seen the threads of sharp silver in the dark curve of her hair, a momentary sinking of the muscles under her clear pallor, a lowering of the inner life. The Irish grandmother had bequeathed to her very blue eyes, about which the black eyelashes pricked out with a pleasing distinctness. The features were not classic—indeed, the nose had an odd little dent; and only a sophisticated taste would have found the face beautiful. The girls could not have told why their eyes had been drawn to it so persistently. She turned from them to the fire, resting a hand on the mantelpiece and a slipper against the andiron.

“I hope you will feel that I am a friend,” she said. “I once had a little girl named Mary—perhaps you know about it.” Their awkward silence answered. “Then you understand why I care about every girl who has that name. If either of you ever want help, any kind of help that an older woman can give, you will find me here and ready. This is not words. Girls have come, often and often, and sometimes I could help. It is worth remembering.” She took

Mame's hand warmly into hers. "Anything," she repeated. "Day or night. There isn't a girl on earth with your name that hasn't a right to anything I can give her."

"I wish you'd do something right now," Minnie ventured.

"Yes, Minnie!"

"Won't you sing for Mame?"

"Of course I will!" She went gladly to the piano and struck familiar chords. "You might join in on the chorus," she suggested. "People don't sing half enough—it feels so good down in your diaphragm."

Their laugh was startled, gratified; they had not expected her to know about vulgar things like feelings down in the diaphragm. She sang *Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground*, in a deep, sweet voice that made Minnie cry, and then, by request, such popular favorites as *Only Lonely* and *Dearie, Good Night*. Mame had the audacity to ask for *Jim Jam John*, earning a reproachful kick from Minnie, but Mrs. Jaffrey did not seem shocked.

"No. Is that a good one?" she said, and made a note of the name. The glow of their good time was in their faces when at last she sum-

moned the elevator for them and smiled them off from her doorway.

"Gee, but I'd like to help her," Minnie said, as the elevator slid down with them.

Mrs. Jaffrey had dropped on a couch, letting her arm fall across her eyes. She lay exhaustedly flat, and her attitude imposed a reluctant silence on the middle-aged maid who came to take away the tea things. The latter's need of speech jerked down her jaw half a dozen times, but not until she had no excuse left for lingering did she venture it.

"I beg pardon, m'am—did you say there'd be just a gentleman for dinner? No ladies?"

The concealing arm did not stir. "No one but Mr. Le Baron," was the tranquil answer.

Hannah struggled visibly while her well trained feet took her inexorably to the door. There her protest made a last stand.

"You weren't thinking of calling up Mrs. Osborne, m'am? She'd likely be alone tonight."

"No, Hannah." The words were expressionless, but after Hannah had made a sighing exit, a smile came out at Mrs. Jaffrey's lips, spreading up in the direction of her hidden eyes.

It still lurked there when, a little later, she rose to greet her guest.

He took it as some dim amusement at him, and his answering smile welcomed her to all his foibles if they could give her a moment's enjoyment. Ladies always laughed at Hugh Le Baron, or scolded him, or tried to make him over, and his good heart took it genially, even while his excitable nerves and mocking brain prepared fresh trouble.

"Well, Marise!" His face—a nervous, mobile face, overlined for his forty-odd years—broke out all over into smiles, as though it were very good to be with her. He drew up a chair beside the couch, its back to the world. "You were lying down," he declared. "Must you sit up, just for me?"

"For Hannah," she corrected him. They smiled over Hannah.

"Tired?"

"Pleasantly!" They smiled over that, too. It had been her father's word, when he came home late from his big law office and his complicated affairs. That was the precious thing about a friendship begun in youth—a word could bring back so much to both.

"I suppose you've been spending yourself, body and soul, on the proletariat," he objected.

"You may call it that. I don't."

"I know." Hugh spoke with rising irritation. "You call it my brother the barkeep and my sister the pants finisher. It's the cult of Saint Francis gone mad."

Her head dropped back. "Oh, be good, Hugh," she murmured.

That set him off. "Good! When you say, 'Be good,' you mean, 'Be brainless.' Women want indiscriminate applause for everything they do. If your idea of companionship is two down cushions before a register—"

Her laugh interrupted. It was a lovable sound, and it magically wiped out his rising scorn, turning him into a good little man, happy that he had given her amusement.

"You do spend yourself, you know," he said mildly.

"I know it," she admitted. "When I talk I seem to use all my bodily organs. I can't learn to do it just with my mind. It takes more out of me than any work I have ever done."

"Who were here?" he asked.

"Only a couple of girls. One of them I

rescued from the night court, a year ago, and she wanted to bring a friend who was headed the same way. Nice girls, really—just needing a friendly hand at the right minute.” She told him about her guests, tranquilly refusing to see that he frowned and jerked in his chair. When she stopped, his comment—a great deal of comment—was kept in by sheer physical violence.

“Well—you were very kind to spare the evening for me,” was all he permitted to escape, as Hannah announced dinner.

Mrs. Jaffrey rose, smiling down into his dark face. “Hughie, when you were six, you must have been the naughtiest little boy in the world,” she said. “How did your mother ever cope with you?” Women were often reminded of Hugh Le Baron’s childhood; perhaps that was one reason they were fond of him, and forgave him much. The face of the small boy—the impish, pretty, black-eyed little scamp—still lurked somewhere behind the worn, experienced face of the man. Marise had a glimpse of it now as he smiled back.

“I worshiped her,” he explained. “Ladies can do anything with me when I worship them, Marise.”

She was cased, as always, in an impenetrable pleasantness. "Come to dinner," she said. "Hannah wanted me to call up Luly, but as you openly and visibly don't worship her, I refused."

"Thank God," he sighed. "Why you have had that trained white slug under foot all these years—"

"Oh, Luly was very useful," she interposed. "And, while I was younger, some sort of chaperon was necessary. She left me freer."

"She was a fat slug. And she was everlastingly *there*, with her fat white knitting. No one ever asked her out, and she never had the sense to go to bed. Do you realize that in all these years and years, this is the first time I have ever dined alone with you?" He asked it with aggrieved intensity, but he could win no response.

"I hope it won't be the last time," was the tranquil answer. It struck from him a quick glance and a note of startled laughter, but, if a warning had been intended, her amiable face gave no sign. And the words, of course, might have meant just what they said. He gave it up with a sigh of impatient helplessness.

"You could have found some one more attractive—but you don't care," he said sadly. "You haven't any heart, Marise; you're as impersonal as nature. You know differences—you knew that Luly Osborne was a deadly bore; but if a merciful heaven hadn't removed her daughter-in-law, and so made her necessary somewhere else, she would have been here to the end. Knitting. You would never have lifted a finger."

"My dear Hugh, for sixteen years I haven't cared what any one was or did, so long as they did not come between me and—my business." Her voice dropped over the last words, as though she were mortally tired.

He turned gentle at once. All through dinner he diverted and took care of her, so selflessly and with so pungent a humor that her look of exhaustion was soon laughed away. It was pleasant to be amusing for Marise, because in years of intense preoccupation she had forgotten about jokes, and her appreciation had a startled quality that was very flattering. Hugh was touchingly pleased with his success. A tragedy gallantly borne confers a subtle rank, and all Marise's world treated her a little like

royalty, though they were as unconscious of this as she was. They brought their devotion to her, and did not dream of questioning the fact that she never sought them.

"Now hasn't it been nicer with no Luly Osborne?" he insisted when Hannah had brought their coffee. "Haven't you noticed a difference?"

She considered. "I have noticed that you behaved better," she said. "With Luly, I have sometimes thought that you were a little—well shall we say abrupt?"

"Say a rude beast, if you'd rather."

"Oh, not for worlds!" protested Marise politely.

He laughed, wholly happy to have her make fun of him. "I know I'm a snob," he confessed. "Intellectually, at least. I don't mind a dowdy body, but I hate to be in the same room with a dowdy brain. Cigarette?" he added, offering his case; but he looked surprised when she took one. "I never saw you do this before," he said, bringing her a light. "Was that Luly, too?"

Hannah was in the room for finger-bowls and candies, and Marise did not answer until they

were alone. Then she took out her cigarette and looked at it thoughtfully.

"I can't endure them," she said, "but I have to take one once in a while, to keep Hannah in order."

"Hannah!" His surprised laugh carried the word so high that she had to put up a warning hand. "I have heard of tobacco for rose bugs, but I never heard of it for housemaids," he protested, dropping his voice.

"You never knew my Aunt Ellen's Maggie," Marise began.

"Oh, didn't I!" he broke in. "She took a dislike to me, and so they had to stop asking me to the house. Your Aunt Ellen explained it with tears in her eyes—that Maggie was so cold to them after my visits that they would have to give them up."

Marise was laughing. Maggie had been a family trial in her day, but twenty years had turned her into a joyous memory.

"How she terrorized them! I remember how nervous they all were if they went home late to a meal. She was the perfect servant grown into a perfect tyrant—too valuable to be given up, and too devoted to be wounded. Well, Hannah

is made of exactly the same material. She would absolutely run me and all my affairs if I had not a firm hand with her. I was warned in time, you see. So I take a cigarette now and then as a matter of discipline—she nearly bursts with disapproval.” Marise replaced the cigarette for a long breath, then again considered it. “I wonder if I haven’t done enough?” she murmured, with a frown of distaste.

He came and took it from her. “I’ll finish it for you,” he said, deeply amused. “There—Hannah will find only a stub. May I take mine into the other room?”

They turned back to the fire, strolling harmoniously. The evening might have been as pleasantly unmomentous as dinner but for an unlucky bit of paper. It had drifted from the piano, and as Hugh picked it up, its words caught his eyes. He brought out eye-glasses to make sure that he had not misread them.

“‘Jim Jam John,’” he repeated. “Is that a private code? Or something to eat?”

“It is a song I want to get.” Storm signals flew at once, but she placidly went on, neither defying nor propitiating him. “A girl this aft-

ernoon spoke of it. Don't lose that—unless you are going to be so very good as to send the song up to me."

He replaced the slip on the piano and weighted it down with an ivory elephant. "I am not," he explained emphatically. "When you try to pretend that the cheap and vulgar songs of cheap and vulgar shows have anything in them for you—"

"Hugh, listen to me," she broke in, without heat, but firmly. "When I used to sing *Hey Diddle Diddle* and *The Three Little Kittens* to my baby, I was not pretending that it meant very much to me; I was only making her happy. And, because it did, it made me happy. Can't you see?"

"But those are classics," he triumphed. "You didn't sing her *Goo Goo Girlie* and—ach!—I can't name them in your presence." He flapped over the music on the piano and pushed it from him. "Can't you see that you don't change yourself by a hair's breadth? All this wallowing in the proletariat—it hasn't even rubbed off on your speech. Look at yourself!" His gesture took in all her harmonious presence, the

big curve of her dark hair, the fine hands and the floating embroideries of her quaint, loose gown. "Just look!"

She obeyed with an impersonal interest. "I could give up pretty clothes—oh, so easily!" she said. "I have thought of it, you know—taking up a sort of uniform, perhaps a serge suit and a crêpe blouse for everything." He shuddered, but she did not notice. "I think it would be a mistake, though. Pretty things appeal to girls. They help to open the door between us. And Hannah freshens them so that they last ages. I am not really extravagant. This is a Paquin gown, but I have worn it for three years."

His rapid headshake took clothes out of the question. "It is not a matter of externals, it's the inner fact. You can't sell your birthright, Marie Louise, you can't escape it. You are hopelessly and forever a lady. Why pretend?"

He could not reach her. She was only patient. "Hughie, first of all I am a mother, the mother of a girl named Mary who, if she is still living, is perhaps in this very city. I have a girl named Mary who doesn't know about me, who must have grown up in common ways, perhaps in vice and dreadfulness. I owe that girl

what she was born to. I am not sentimental now. In her little girl years I just longed like any mother to get her back in my arms. Now, if she is living, she is nearly nineteen—oh, there is not one thing I haven't faced! And not one thing I can't face, if I can find her."

He was horribly moved, but tried to scowl denial. "You can face it in theory—yes."

"I can face it in fact, if it comes. I shall keep close to the things that working girls like. Nothing must be alien to me, nothing must shock or repel me. It is my life job—to keep myself wide open. Can't you accept that and stop fighting me?"

"I have to be honest with you, and so I have to fight you." His voice begged her forgiveness. "Of course, I am selfish in it, too—but it is not all selfish. When I see you wasting such a life as yours could be—"

"How can you call it wasted?" she interrupted. "I have done definite things that have helped to better working conditions. I am not born to that work—sometimes I think they have put me on boards and committees merely because they were sorry. But they find out that I am very faithful, and that nothing is too hard

or too dull for me to carry out, and so I have made myself a little valuable. Oh, I really have helped. And there is what it has all done for me. You knew what I was as a girl. Think back. Can you say I haven't grown?"


He thought back a long way, his eyes touched at what he saw. "Perhaps I wasn't qualified to judge you very harshly in those days," he admitted, with a wry smile, "but, of course, you are a lot more of a person than you would have been if—all that hadn't happened. Oh, yes. You are like the man who dug up his field to find the treasure, and so got a magnificent crop. Only—isn't it time to stop for the harvest, Marise?"

She, too, was thinking back, amusedly for the moment. "Oh, but I was spoiled!" she said. "I had been over-loved. I thought the whole world adored me as my parents and grandparents did. When I went down a street, I supposed every one was thinking, 'See that dear, fresh young girl with her skates!' " She laughed. "And, of course, I thought that marriage would mean a rapture of loving sympathy from morning till night. Poor Arnold—I can see his side of it, you know. My demand must have been a

frightful annoyance to a man who—well, had rather a keen eye for flaws.”

Hugh’s face had grown dark. “Mean little hound!” he muttered.

“Oh, yes. What he did was beyond all defense.” Then, for the first time, her smooth surface was broken and the old passionate question leaped out: “What did he do with Mary—where did he take my baby? He had been gone only two nights; he could not have taken her very far. He was frightening and punishing me, but he would not have done anything to hurt her.” She started to her feet, walking swiftly past him, her hands twisted together. “Why, he loved his baby, after his fashion. And she was not there in the wreck, she was not. I can be absolutely certain of that—oh, thank God, I went and looked myself, I didn’t trust any one else. I climbed over every inch of those broken cars, I saw every foot of track—oh, they were so good to me, those rough men! They lifted everything, brought me any least scrap of cloth, in case it might be a clue. And I found all the people who had sat near him—hurt and dying, some of them, but all swore that he had been alone. And Arnold lay there,



dead, and couldn't tell me. I could have killed him again for that blank silence. Oh, Hugh, was there ever anything so baffling?" He did not speak, and presently she came back to her chair, seating herself with measured deliberateness, taking her hands into a quieting clasp. "I must not, I must not," she said. The words had a sound of old habit. When she spoke again, the passion was gone; her voice was only very tired. "I don't like your fable," she said. "For the man never found his pot of gold. He only got crops. Don't wish that for me."

"I must."

"No, Hughie."

"How can I help it, dear, when I feel that finding your treasure would be the blackest misfortune that could happen to you?"

"No. No misfortune on earth could wear on me like this eternal question. I never hear any one say 'Mary' on the street that my heart doesn't— She was so particular about her name, funny little person! 'Not baby—Mawy.' That is all I have to find her by. I have lost her face—I lost it years ago. From looking so hard, I suppose. I can see Arnold any moment—he was handsome, you remember, in a surface

way; but I haven't seen my baby's face in ten years. I try and try—I can't get it back." Her eyes fixed on the picture beside the chimney and she forgot her guest until his sighing movement roused her. She turned to him with a new note, a clear little laugh of contrition.

"My dear Hugh, if this is what happens when we dine alone, I shall get back Luly in the morning," she exclaimed.

"Now, of course, you are going to hide again;" he spoke savagely. "For God's sake, don't be stingy—if you give a confidence, don't immediately try to get it back!"

She still laughed. "What I have probably given you is a totally false impression. I don't live at such high tension—one couldn't, after sixteen years. I am a very busy, cheerful person, most of the time. Years take the anguish out of any earthly experience if you are willing they should. Generally we aren't willing, you know—we are sentimental, and cling, and pretend, and imitate our own past emotions. That is a frightful temptation to a woman. But I have been learning honesty from you, Hughie. It is your most maddening trait, and yet I can't help trying to acquire it."

He was troubled, not knowing whether to accept her as she was now or as the tormented soul of a little while ago. Frowning at her brought nothing further, and he presently gave it up.

"Well, I'd better go," he said, rising reluctantly. "When may I come again?"

"Oh, I will call you up," she said, and so he went away cross and curt, but, ten minutes later, his voice came back over the telephone. "I think I neglected to say good night, and to thank you for asking me," he admitted meekly. "Good night, Marise. And I do thank you."

"Good night, Hugh." Her voice smiled. "Stay good if you can."

"I'll try. And—why couldn't I come next Sunday?"

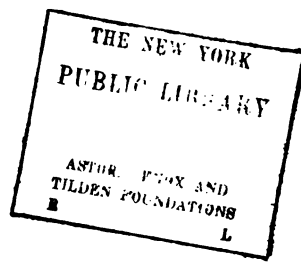
"I will call up."

"Oh, you—!" And the telephone was abruptly cut off.

If Hugh Le Baron could not tell which was the real Marise, the reasonable woman who laughed at him or the tortured one who wrung her hands, neither could Mrs. Jaffrey herself. Into her most controlled and sensible moments the old hot cry could always burst. When she



"When may I come again?"



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was alone that night, though there had been no preliminary gathering and rising of tears, though she had even gone up-stairs smiling over Hugh's final leave-taking, she suddenly found herself sobbing.

"There is nothing new to cry about, and it does no good," she argued, and, while the lights were lit, long training kept the shaken body obedient; but in the darkness her defenses fell and the past took possession.

It began sharply when she was eighteen. Before that lay a golden blur, a girlhood irradiated by love in a beautiful home. Then the city, spreading up-town, had swallowed the old house, and in the same year Arnold Jaffrey, meeting her at her coming-out ball, had swallowed Marie Louise James as easily.

He was not a bad man, Arnold; indeed, he led an exemplary life. He had a mean little soul, but when he did mean little acts, he found exalted reasons for them. The loving impetuous girl, recklessly generous, trustfully indifferent to her own advantage, yet expecting the same lavishness from him, unconsciously gave him daily the measure of his own nature, and his inflamed vanity had daily to argue away the

discrepancy, to prove that all her rich qualities were in reality faults and flaws. The nagging logic, the eternal snub and suppression, had at first utterly bewildered Marise, who had never in her joyous life received a criticism that was not wrapped in tenderness. For a while she tried wildly to be whatever impossible thing it was that he was demanding. Then, as his demands only increased, there was revolt, storm, occasional lightning flashes of truth that showed Arnold to himself as he was, a sight never to be forgiven. It was after such a revelation, one black day, that, with the highest motives, he had removed their little girl from her mother's house. The word "separation" had been flung in his face.

"I am not going on with this. I have done my human best, and you're not worth it. Father will tell me the way out," Marise had cried, pinning on her hat for immediate action.

Arnold of the exemplary life had quailed before the threat of public trouble. How he appeared was the one real passion of his life. He did some very swift thinking as his wife left the house, and then he acted in the best interests of society and of his child.

Marie Louise had gone down to her father's office at the other end of the city, taking her trouble to him for the first time in three bitter years. They had talked long and intimately, and then he had come home with her, his dear face full of her trouble, and they had gone to the nursery together. Neither Mona, the new nurse, nor little Mary was there, and Mrs. Jaffrey had summoned the housemaid.

"Why, Hannah, where is the baby?"

Such simple, ordinary words to carry burnt into one's flesh! And then Hannah's surprised, "Wasn't she to go with Mr. Jaffrey, m'am? I thought he said—"

The next clear thing was Arnold's letter on her dressing-table. He had taken this step only after the most careful and painful deliberation. Marise was hysterical, not the wisest person at the moment to have charge of a child. If she was bent on leaving him, she must go without their little girl, to whom he had in no way forfeited his right. He thought it best—and in the long run kindest—to take little Mary away for a few days, that his wife might see for herself what life would be without her. He would communicate presently and give her a

chance to show that she had come to her senses. It was a patient, forbearing letter, excellent to produce in court, and he had kept a copy.

They had tried, quietly, to find where he had gone, but it had seemed best to avoid publicity and wait. And then, two days later, Arnold Jaffrey had been lifted, dead, from the wreckage of a Long Island train, and the whole country had joined in the search for little Mary Jaffrey and Mona Molloy, her nurse.

After that life was a nightmare of journeys and false clues and interviews and cruel letters from cranks and sentimentalists and fresh hope that ended always in fresh despair. Mona Molloy, traced back for eleven years, was proved to have led a life as exemplary as Arnold's own. All Arnold's money went in the search, and Marise's heritage would have followed if her father, dying eight years later, had not left the principal securely tied up. That act of his, showing that hope was really gone, had broken something in Marise. She was ill for a while, then came out quieter, different. She seemed to have accepted her loss, for she made no more direct search, and her quests among the poor were ostensibly only to find out

how she could help. Nevertheless, her work against child labor had been done while Mary would have been under fourteen; since then she had worked over factory and shop legislation and decent amusements for young people. In the last year—Hugh Le Baron had seen it with a shudder—she had begun to work for the present help and future salvation of girls who had fallen. She had gone a long way from her sheltered beginning, for she had learned to stand spirit to spirit with any living being, open and unshrinking; but it was a significant fact that not one of these girls who responded would have dared to lay a hand on her hand uninvited or a head against her shoulder. Her spirit mothered them, but not her body, and they knew it better than she.

Body and soul, that night, Marise mothered her little girl, giving herself up without stint to the forbidden emotion, and when common sense tried to interfere, she drove it off with a passionate, "I have been good for so long! I am going to have her this once!" When at last she slept, the little girl in her arms became so real that she said to her in surprise, "Why, my baby, I thought you had been lost. Have you

been here all the time?" And the baby said, "A-a-all a time!"—drawing it out in her funny little way. So Marise, exquisitely light-hearted, set about telling Hugh and every one what a mistake had been made. But presently doubt came, and she said piteously to the baby, "Ah, I have dreamed this so often! Are you sure it is real this time?" Then the baby slipped out of her arms, and she was awakening, and once more it was not real. After a heartsick effort to creep back into the dream, she accepted her lot and faced the day.

"Good preparation for two hours with a secretary and a board meeting," she told herself, her palms pressing her hot temples.

She was late, and the secretary was there when she came from her bath, so she slipped into a dressing-gown and dictated letters over her breakfast table in the little sunny study where she kept filing cabinet and typewriter and her big official desk. When Hannah brought word that a woman was asking to see her, she was loath to be interrupted.

"Didn't she give a name, Hannah? What sort of woman? Are you sure she is not an agent?" But when Hannah explained that it

was a "working woman," she rose at once, drawing her lavender and lace indifferently about her. It was Hannah who saw to it that her dressing-gowns were befitting her position. Her closets had been full of such things once, and Hannah still found treasure of lace and embroidery in the old finery. Mrs. Jaffrey looked a very grand lady indeed as she put back the portière of the drawing-room with a half bared arm and stood still in her surprise.

Her visitor was a very large woman, not stout, but enormously ample, a super-woman with a broad madonna brow over Celtic gray eyes and hair still bright auburn, though she must have been well into the fifties. She looked big-hearted, too—everything about her was big, perhaps even her temper; those great arms suggested that they could have hurled things in their day. She rose from her chair, up and up till Mrs. Jaffrey had a humorous desire to cry, "Stop!" and came in some haste to a seat, that the other might be reduced again to more probable proportions.

"Do sit down," she urged. "You wanted to see me?"

"M'am, I do." The rich voice hesitated, be-

trayed trouble, yet evidently not trouble of her own. There was even an air of majestic success about her. If she wore boots that bulged at the joints, it was plainly because she found them more comfortable at that stage, and the self-respecting black hat seemed to say that she had found nothing in more recent styles that suited her as well. Her gloves might have been bought for the occasion, they were so shinily fresh, so unexplored at their pinched tips. The high cheek-bones and certain intonations in the voice had lumped her for Hannah with those who have alternate Thursdays and Sundays off, but Mrs. Jaffrey's more subtle observation recognized an independent householder.

"Mrs. ———?" she suggested. That helped.

"Mrs. Healy, m'am. My girl, Mary Healy, was to a Christmas entertainment here a year ago—you'd not remember, you had so many. But my Mary, she came away saying, 'If ever I can help that lady, who's been so good to all girls—'" Again she encountered difficulty.

"And she thinks she has come across something?" Mrs. Jaffrey asked, so simply that the other relaxed gratefully into explanation.

"Mary's a real sensible, steady sort of a girl;

she's got character, if I do say it. They think the world of her down at the office. And when she first got wind of this girl I'm telling you about, she says to me, 'Mama, my heart's all swelling up fit to burst with romance, but I'm going to keep my shirt on,' she says. You'll excuse the expression. There's so many boys after Mary that she does pick up their language. But she's as refined as a princess underneath. She—"

The faintest gesture of Mrs. Jaffrey's hand accepted all Mary's qualities and sent the narrative on again.

"Well, as I was saying, she run across this May Laguna when May was out of a job, like she generally is, and Mary says to her, 'May, you're about as fit to take care of yourself in a city as a three days old kitten,' she says. That's Mary, you know. She'll say anything to anybody. Even when she was a little tyke, she was never afraid of any one, high or low. I don't mean she's fresh—you wouldn't find a more modest-appearing girl, for all she's such a leader. But she does come right out with what she wants to say. It's like she knew she was as good as anybody, but was kind of used to it and

didn't have to keep rubbing it in, like some of these girls do."

"I understand," said Mrs. Jaffrey, and again the narrative progressed.

" 'A three days old kitten,' she says. 'Why don't you go home to your folks?' 'I haven't got any,' says May. 'I'm the door-step brand.' Well, that set Mary to thinking, and she got the story out of May quiet like, as if for no reason at all. And then she says to me, 'Mama, there may not be a thing in it, and I'm not going to give May any tip, but Mrs. Jaffrey ought to know that there's a girl about my age that was left on a canal boat when she was two years old.' "

Mrs. Jaffrey searched the past with unemotional attentiveness.

"I don't remember any canal-boat baby," she said, "but no child of two could have been picked up that year without my hearing of it. I went and looked at every one."

"Yes, m'am. I suppose you did. I never rightly knew your story, for my Mary was down with the scarlet fever about that time—I nearly lost her—and for weeks I wasn't caring about the newspapers. But these were ignorant, low,

foreign people, these Lagunas—they couldn't read or write; and when the little thing was dropped on board one night while they were tied up, they just naturally took her along in the morning like they would have taken a pup. The wife was a real kind woman who'd lost her own baby. It wasn't till after she died that things got—" She broke off, and Mrs. Jaffrey's nod of understanding carried them past that chapter of May's fortunes.

"I am always ready to see any girl," she said impersonally. "This does not sound to me—However, I should like to meet the girl. Your Mary has been very kind."

"Ah, she's the best girl in the whole world!" Mrs. Healy welcomed back her topic. "And that sensible! 'Mama,' she says, 'if Mrs. Jaffrey would just let me bring May in some evening without saying nothing—it might be she knows of a job May could get, and we'd talk of that while Mrs. Jaffrey looked her over.'"

Marise started up as though some uncontrollable repulsion had for an instant the upper hand. Then she brought herself back and expressed warm thanks.

"Won't your Mary come in with this girl to-

night?" she went on. "I am sure I could help her to find work. What hour would be convenient?"

"Eight o'clock, m'am? Mary don't get in from the office till six, and she always likes to clean herself before she has her dinner. Company or no company, she wants to be sweet as a rose, always. Even when she was a little thing, it was, 'Mawy's dess a-a-all dirty!' if she so much as—"

Mrs. Jaffrey had winced; then she smiled, brilliantly, breathlessly. "Yes, they do say—that," she assented, and tacitly hurried her guest out. In the darkness of the hall she stood for a moment with her forehead pressed between her palms. Then she went back to her dictation.

II

MRS. JAFFREY came in late from the board meeting that afternoon with just time for a half-hour's rest before dinner. She refused to see letters on the hall table and messages on the telephone pad, and she stepped softly lest Hannah, busy in the dining-room, should come between her and the delicious, vacant flatness toward which she had been straining all the way home. She reached her room in safety and her eager hands had met at her throat when a sight made her start back with a moan of dismay. It was only an evening gown spread out on the bed, a pleasing gown of midnight blue and silver, but Marise stared at it as if it had been a serpent. After a shocked moment, she opened her door again and called faintly:

"Han-nah!"

Hannah was in the hall below and came with troubled haste, prepared to fill a hot-water bottle or telephone the doctor with quiet efficiency. For service on familiar and accepted lines, Hannah was a jewel beyond price, and it was not

her fault that nature had limited her to a rabbit jaw and the smallest mouth compatible with human uses.

"Yes, m'am?" she said, poised between bathroom and telephone.

Mrs. Jaffrey pointed to the gown. "What is that for?" she demanded.

Hannah physically contracted and stiffened for protest. Evidently she had met this situation before.

"Mrs. Livingston's musicale, m'am. You have it on your calendar for nine o'clock this evening."

"Oh, thank heaven it isn't a dinner!" Mrs. Jaffrey threw off furs and cloak with a sweep of relief. "I can't go to a musicale to-night, Hannah. I'm dead, dead. Besides, some one is coming. Put that away and give me something comfortable."

Hannah went over to the bed and made a feint of gathering up the gown.

"You threw over Mrs. Livingston's reception, too," she observed.

"It doesn't matter. She won't notice whether I am there or not. I will write her an apology if you insist," Marise added with a smile, tucking herself up on the couch. "Throw something

over me and let me rest, there's a good soul."

Hannah's mouth had dwindled to a mere disapproving pinch under her conservative nose.

"You are not asked as much as you used to be, Mrs. Jaffrey," she said, bringing a light rug. "There were three dinners last week that you had a good right to go to—one of twenty-four covers at the Stanley Hopes' to meet the French ambassador and his wife. The paper had a long piece about it. Your friends will think it queer that you were not included."

Mrs. Jaffrey, relaxed, flat as she had longed to be, smiled with drowsy good humor.

"But the papers will say I was at the musicale, since I accepted," she murmured. "Won't that do?"

Hannah was picking up the discarded clothes with a professional eye for their needs.

"No, m'am, it will not," she said firmly. "You have to show yourself, to keep up. Entertaining as little as you do, and never making your calls—" Then she had to stop, for Mrs. Jaffrey had fallen asleep.

Marise awoke refreshed, made new by the marvelous bodily resiliency that had kept for her, through everything, the look of a young

and living woman. Girls had been shown her too often for her to feel anything momentous about the evening. She made herself look attractive from old habit, and was reading comfortably by the fire when, at the stroke of eight, the door-bell rang. In all these years, perhaps, she had never been more tranquil, more remote from her loss, than she was at the moment when Hannah passed to open the door.

Voices spoke outside, and suddenly Mrs. Jafrey's heart began to beat, great slow beats such as dramatists sometimes use to prelude the rising of the curtain. It used always to be like this before a fresh clue, but her body had been learning better since her mind had given up hope. She rose, impatient to get the agitation over with, and went a few steps to meet her guests as Hannah parted the portières and turned on more lights. Face to face with the two girls, the agitation dropped away as suddenly as it had risen, leaving her very quiet and aloof, with an inner smile for the palpable excitement of Mrs. Healy's Mary.

There was not an instant's doubt which girl was which. They might have stood for embodiments of Success and Failure. Mary Healy

was glowing, vigorous, bravely handsome; May Laguna, fragile and weakly pretty. Mary's brown hair, easily effective, waved back as simply as Mrs. Jaffrey's own, while May's metallic yellow frizzes strained piteously and wildly for effect. Mary, the much loved, looked confidently on the world as her oyster, but May knew it for the were-wolf that it was and watched in furtive silence for the ever-ready fang. She left the business of the interview wholly to Mary; and Mrs. Jaffrey, circumspectly studying her, began to suspect that the awful hair was not the open symbol that it looked, but a childish effort to propitiate a devouring fate. The gray eyes, secret, uneasy, had a vague softness, as though they had not yet wholly understood what they had witnessed.

"What if that really were my child?" The thought had come so often that it scarcely quickened Mrs. Jaffrey's pulses, but she moved to a chair beside May, and though her mind knew it for impossible, her eyes searched the downcast face and the wisp of a body for any trace of family likeness.

"You see, it's like this, Mrs. Jaffrey;" Mary Healy was keeping up the fiction that they had

come to find work for May, and doing it well, in spite of burning cheeks and a volcanic consciousness of drama. She had openly waited, the first moments, for a heart-satisfying, "My child!" Then, as that was not forthcoming, she had gone stoutly to work to fill in the necessary interval while Mrs. Jaffrey made her observations. "It's like this. May can take dictation pretty fast, but she can't spell—can you, May?" The question was a tacit apology, and May's nod was unresentful. "I had high school and then business college, so of course I can spell—that's how I got into an office like Engel and Weeks's. Mr. Weeks, he tried me out himself, and he says to me, 'Good God, you're the first girl I ever saw that could spell renaissance. If you can spell façade and mezzanine, I'll start you at twelve per.'" It was a delicious memory. Success might be Mary's normal atmosphere, but evidently the breath of it never lost its tang. "Well, it would have been funny if I couldn't, with all the chances I've had," she concluded. "But May hasn't had half a show."

"No," said Mrs. Jaffrey. The descending note of sympathy produced an odd little physical flutter in the girl, as though she stirred

breast feathers against a warm nest. For the first time her eyes sought Mrs. Jaffrey's.

"I'm too far behind," she said. "I can't never catch up." The voice had an ineffectual drag, and Mary was kindly anxious to make excuse for that, too.

"May isn't real strong," she urged. "She didn't get a fair start when she was little." That was coming breathlessly close to the real meaning of their visit. Mary would not have even hinted a question—she was a very nice girl; but Mrs. Jaffrey, restless under a sense that drama was expected, met the alert eyes with a grave negative. There was no sign of her child in this bit of human driftwood, her headshake said, and Mary visibly collapsed, hope escaping in a long sigh.

"What should you like to do?" Mrs. Jaffrey went on.

The direct question frightened May back into hiding, and Mary had to come to her aid.

"The trouble with May is that she wants to be a lady," she explained reasonably. "Mama gets hopping when I say things like that—she says any girl can be a lady; but she means well behaved and all that. Now here's the way I

dope it out;” she bent forward, eager to be understood, and perhaps a little to instruct, for Mary Healy was used to seeing things more clearly than her associates. “There’s more to being a lady than nice manners and high school, or than putting on a wrapper when you go home, and having your hair curled at a shop, and perfume, and restaurants, like May sees it. It’s something you can’t buy—you’ve got to grow it. Do you get me?”

Mrs. Jaffrey gravely assented. The simple candid equality of this glowing girl was putting her democracy of spirit to a test seldom encountered, and she had to remember forcibly that she liked it.

“Well, then,” Mary concluded, “I’d rather be a top-notch working girl, a real swell of a working girl”—her laugh bubbled up, a good, warm little gurgle—“than a poor imitation of a lady. Am I right?” The question was rhetorical, for she knew gloriously well how right she was. She settled back in her chair, triumphant, and her shining face betrayed that there was no fun on earth to beat the fun of being Mary Healy. She took any possible color out of May Laguna as the sun puts out a candle flame, and Mrs.

Jaffrey felt a perverse desire to draw shades and give the little candle a chance.

"I wonder how you would like sewing?" she suggested.

"No, m'am." The answer was limp rather than firm, yet final.

"You tell Mrs. Jaffrey about when you were little," Mary put in excusedly.

May told her tale baldly, without imagination or grace, leaving blanks that only her downcast eyes commented on—making nothing of it all, and coming out as empty as she had gone in; and Mrs. Jaffrey, testing herself, cried in her sorrowing heart:

"Yes, yes! If this were my child, I could take her in, love her, teach her, bring her as far as I could and never wince for her failings—I could accept it and be glad if I had found my child!" The assurance exalted her, filling her with the joy of her strength. She longed to run with it to Hugh, who doubted. This had been her life lesson, and it was not ill learned, since she could have taken May Laguna to her heart. When they rose to go, she folded May's hand between both hers.

"I will see what I can do," she promised.

"Come back to-morrow at eleven. And thank you," she added with meaning to Mary Healy.

Mary's quick smile had a wistful curl at the corner. "I wish—I wish it could have been," she ventured.

"Come and see me again, Mary;" Mrs. Jaffrey was kindly, but perfunctory. Only young women who needed her help could rouse her poignant interest, and palpably no one needed help less than Mrs. Healy's Mary.

She shut the door on them and turned back, hesitating between the fire and bed as she put out unnecessary lights, her thoughts entirely on the present, her heart, for once, idly content. She was asking nothing, and yet it was in that moment that the longing of years was granted. Against the sudden dimness she saw once more the face of her baby. It leaped into life full before her as she had not seen it for years, the dear, blooming, earnest little face, tipped up to her in beaming love. "Mar-die!"—the beloved old name with its rising crow sounded in her ears. For a living instant the child was there, restored to her, not a line forgotten, and then, though she had not moved or breathed, it was gone. She strained sight and senses, she fixed

passionately on every remembered detail, but she could not call back the vision. Instead, she could see only the face of Mary Healy. She thrust it aside, but it came back again and again, and once more her heart began to thud out some code message. Quiet and book were impossible. She called up Hugh, but he was out. Then, finding the blue and silver gown still spread on her bed, she summoned Hannah.

"Help me dress and call a taxi," she commanded. "I am going, after all."

Hannah's Victorian spirit rejoiced, but cautiously. Mrs. Jaffrey was perfectly capable of changing her mind again.

"You see, m'am, you, being what you are, can live on the West Side, as some could not," she explained over the hooks. "But it isn't just the same as if you had an East Side address. You do have to keep up a bit more."

"'Keep up'!" Marise murmured, absent eyes staring at the lady who stared back at her from the mirror. She was not seeing what the world saw—that her blue eyes were sharply fringed with black, that her pale face had distinction and her tall body grace; she was seeing the long struggle. How she had "kept up!"

Not in Hannah's way, but because a gallant spirit had come down to her from her forebears, and she had never questioned its commands. Perhaps if one could learn to give up, let go, look the tattered thing that one was—

"The taxi, m'am," said Hannah obligingly. You could never be sure of Mrs. Jaffrey till you had her safely started; and even then she had been known to come back.

And she was to come back, after all, for at the street door below she found herself face to face with Hugh Le Baron. He started guiltily.

"I wasn't coming up, Marise," he explained at once. "I mean, I was going to call up first and ask if I might, for a moment."

The boyishness of it made her smile. "And I am going out," she said. "It is music at the Livingstons'. Why don't you come with me?"

Her power over his feelings did not always extend to his actions. His headshake was unregretful. "If there is one thing I hate worse than the theater, it is a concert," he declared. "And a musicale in a private house is a degree worse."

"But you adore music!"

"Oh, music! I'm talking of musicales. You at least get some air in a concert, and you don't have to give up your seat and stand against the wall. When I have music, I want music—not a strangled party, bursting with suppressed conversation."

He felt hotly on so many subjects. Marise had a moment's shame for her own general indifference.

"Concerts are not like that," she argued.

"No; but to have five hundred people breathing about you in rows is enough to spoil anything. They come between you and the music—turn its current. Do you want me to tell you how I get my music? It is a secret, but I will tell you."

She had a sudden humorous recollection of her taxicab, grinding at its meter a few feet away; but Hugh's confidence was evidently a precious one and must not be checked.

"How?" she asked.

"Three or four times a winter I have Franzen come in, sometimes with the Quartette, sometimes alone, and lord, I have music!"

"Just you? The Franzen Quartette?"

Her astonishment set him smiling. "It isn't

wholly ruinous—we are old friends. And what if it is! I haven't many dissipations. I lie flat on my back with a pipe, and they turn loose."

"And not another soul to share it?"

"That is where the mad king of Bavaria knew what he was about."

"But don't you feel guilty, selfish?"

"Not I! Silly convention, Marise. It isn't unselfishness that makes Fanny Livingston ask in every one she knows; it is because she loves a party better than she loves music. I have had my temptations—of course, I have always thought of having you. But it is music I want! Not human emotions."

She was oddly, ridiculously hurt. "Good heavens, my taxi!" she said with a note of laughter. "Well, I am sorry to leave you like this—"

"Do you really want to go?"

"Not especially. But I was restless. I wanted to go somewhere."

"Come to my place and we will make a little music ourselves." She only smiled. "Oh, you're as proper as Hannah," he scolded her. "You would undoubtedly go with me to any

cabaret restaurant, full of beasts and swine deliberately working up their appetites—”

“Hughie,” she broke in plaintively, “there is a French saying that a waiting cab is like a gnawing worm. Couldn’t we overturn the social code some other night?”

He laughed, his good heart ready to admit all his trying and importunate qualities. “Let me send it away and come up for a while,” he begged. “There is so much to talk about! And you are in no mood for music, if you are restless; you won’t get anything from it. Won’t you please?”

She was secretly glad to yield. It was curious how he had taken on value since that confidence about the Franzen Quartette—which he would not share even with her.

“You will have to face Hannah,” she warned him. “She will be furious.”

“We can slip in with your latch-key, and perhaps she won’t hear us,” was his manly proposition, but Marise scorned to evade, and rang her door-bell with an effrontery that was humorous until Hannah’s silent disgust was confronting them. Then she stepped forward without explanation or apology, mistress of her

household, dropping her cloak into the unwilling arms.

"I shall not need it," she said serenely, and passed on into the drawing-room.

Hugh followed, twinkling with silent laughter. When she had settled herself by the fire, he stood over her in mocking contemplation, still so amused that she had to give him his cue.

"Well!" she said tolerantly.

"Oh, Marise, you a democrat, you close to the heart of the people!" His laughter came out. "You the apostle of liberty, fraternity and equality—with the best trained servants in New York! Can't you see the joke?"

She looked more startled than amused. "I am democratic," she said hotly, because of that instant of doubt. "If there is anything I have learned out of life, it is that. 'Write me then as one who loves his fellow men.'"

"It can't be done!" Hugh brought up a chair with a protesting sweep. "I tell you, if you have brains, taste, discrimination, and the great luck to be born into the educated classes, it is rot to pretend that you can love your fellow men. It is dishonest. You can't."

"Yes, you can, Hugh. To-night, I tested—"

He interrupted. A generation of indignant ladies had not been able to break Hugh Le Baron of interrupting when his blood was up.

"I walked down Fifth Avenue this afternoon about five o'clock, and I looked on my fellow men and women—oh, lord, the women! Their painted red mouths and their pinched, tilted feet and their silly, empty eyes—their silly, empty souls! And the common voices and the overfed faces of the men—all animal and no spirit. I hated them. I hated them so that if the street hadn't been pretty well paved down, I should be at this moment in the lock-up; my hands ached for a stone. It is right to hate them!"

"It is not only wrong, but it is stupid," said Marise strongly. "It is seeing a part instead of the whole; it is ignoring the fact that you have had every chance and they none—none. Perhaps the very persons you are hating are wonders when you know what they have come from, how far they have brought themselves up the long hard way. For you to sit up there where you were born and to throw stones down

on them— I tell you, Hugh, take any dozen of them and live with them for a year, and you will have found in all of them qualities—courage, generosity, kindness—that will wipe the hate out of you. You will come out humbled, and marveling that they are, after all, so fine.”

He shook an obstinate head. “It is the proper sentimental thing to say so, but I don’t believe it. I could have shown you dozens this afternoon who hadn’t a teaspoonful of nobility in their whole composition. Love them? I think too highly of love to misuse the word like that. You may feel pity and appreciation, but you don’t feel love.”

“I feel something that makes me give the greater part of my life for them. If that is not love, I don’t know what love is.”

He stared at her, forgetting their argument. “What love is,” he repeated. “No—you don’t know what love is.”

She had only to frown, the least little shadow of a withdrawing frown, and he had jerked himself to another attitude and another subject.

“Why were you restless?” he asked. “Had anything happened?”

She could not tell him what had happened. If she confessed that the beloved little face had been given back to her, the shy miracle might never repeat itself. Yet she longed to hover near the secret.

"I had visitors," she said. "A poor little blonded waif was brought for me to look at. She had been dropped on a canal boat when she was two years old and taken along like a stray puppy. It must have been about the same year, too."

"Well?"

His startled interest surprised her. "Oh, it was impossible," she explained. "There was not a line, a suggestion. She had gray eyes, but they were lighter than Mary's. This was a forlorn, spineless little rag of humanity. Mary had force, character."

"But, my dear girl—" Then he broke off, hating what he had to say.

"You think that life could have so changed her?" She faced it bravely, then shook her head. "Oh, there would be something, some trace of what she had been. Surely, Hugh!"

"How had it happened? How did you escape knowing of it at the time?"

She told the story, baldly, as May had told it, and was distressed to see his growing excitement.

"Why, Hugh, I sat beside her, like this," she insisted. "I studied every line, I made her talk. If she had been a negro, it couldn't have been more impossible!"

He made it worse by pretending to be convinced. Hugh pretended so badly! "Yes, of course. Yes, I suppose you would have felt—seen—something. If not at the time, then after—Marise! What is the matter?"

She had risen slowly to her feet, and her face between her clenched hands was startlingly white. She made a pitiful effort to speak in her every-day voice.

"Why, I did—see something. After she had gone. I saw—Mary's face. For the first time in years and years. I saw it, and then it was gone. But I can't—really—believe—" Breath failed her, but she seated herself again, bravely erect, and took her hands into a quieting clasp, as though she told herself, "I must not!"

He shaded his eyes from her courage. "There was no mark on Mary, no least scar that you would know?"

"No, nothing. Only the clothes she went away in. The simplest little white corduroy coat—but the white silk lining had tiny pink roses on it. . . . Mary did love those roses! . . . Ah, Hugh, she could not have changed into—that. I know my baby. I would rather she were this May Laguna than never find her—I mean that with all my heart. I could make the best of it. But I simply know it isn't true, that's all. I was startled for a moment; but the little face was sure to come back some day, and having the girl brought here would account for it, don't you see? No; that is not my child." And she leaned back triumphantly, her fright forcibly put from her.

"Of course, you are right;" he spoke more heartily. "But don't you want me to see this girl and trace her up a bit, simply so that there need never be a question? Have you kept her address?"

"She is coming here to-morrow morning—I mean to find work for her. I will look into it myself, to convince you." She smiled. "I know, you see."

"Yes; I suppose you do." He really was convinced. "Well, if I can help—if there is

anything on earth I can do—you know that, Marise."

"Yes, I know."

They fell silent, but for once it was Hugh who held her thoughts. He was always so eager to help, to take any earthly trouble for her. In her preoccupation, she had grown to accept this as a matter of course, even as a right, but to-night it touched her freshly. She felt guilty for the past, and there was a sickish little fright for the future—for he did not want her when he had the Franzen Quartette. She longed to say something more than kind; even, for a homesick moment, to put her hand into the hand lying on his knee. Then she shook herself, bodily, and smiled under his questioning glance.

"Let us talk about your affairs," she said. "I am so tired of mine. Are you building anything very beautiful?"

"Oh, rather. I want you to see the Morton house when it is finished." He was so happy to tell her about it that she was more than ever touched and ashamed, and her self-reproach kept coming between her and what he was say-

ing. He thought that he was tiring her, and very soon rose to go.

"This is not to count against me as a visit," he said. "It was merely an accidental encounter."

She made a purposely conventional answer—that it was good of him to come or something like that; and he went away visibly saddened—not dreaming how her heart cried out after him.

And he must never dream it. She had clearly forbidden Hugh to love her, and she knew that her wise coolness had done its work: he might be wistful, but he did not suffer, he lived his life contentedly and followed many interests. He might at any moment marry some one else, some woman who dared let him come near. Until to-night, Marise had not realized how that would hurt. She had not wanted love in her life—she had simply wanted her child; and she had not guessed how much Hugh meant to her until he had told her in serene confidence that when he had the Franzen Quartette, he did not want her. Every time she turned back to that, it wounded her afresh, till at last it struck

from her a broken "Hughie!" that was close to tears.

"But I must not, I must not!" she exclaimed, and again she took up the burden of her strength. The new longing must be put down instantly, to-night, strangled without flinching; for of all the men on earth, Hugh Le Baron was the least fitted to abide by the situation if she found her Mary.

The two in one household would be unthinkable. She faced it in detail, that she might clear her brain of misting desires. Hugh hating all things common, even criminally fastidious, impatient and outspoken—and this waif of destiny, who could have had no chance; no, it was forever impossible. If Hugh was growing more importunate—and to-night she could not deny that he was—she must see less of him. There could be no weakness. Marise settled it strongly there before the fire, then went up to bed, captain of her soul.

In the morning she busied herself with May Laguna's future, and, after much telephoning, found a possible opening for her in a feather factory—feathers seemed rather in May's line. And then, of course, the girl did not come. It

had been written on her that she would never come when she was expected. Marise was at first only relieved; and then that absurd fright that Hugh had given her began to revive. It was utter nonsense. One good look into the vapid face would lay it forever. And yet the discovery of a waif who had slipped through the net of her search, those first years, was disturbing. For the sake of a clear record, May's origin should be looked up. After waiting restlessly until mid-afternoon, Mrs. Jaffrey called up the office of Engel and Weeks and asked for Mary Healy.

"Oh, hello, Mrs. Jaffrey!" Mary's welcome was so joyous that Marise found response a little difficult. Her "Good afternoon, Mary," sounded chilly by comparison, and she hastened on to her business.

"May didn't show up?" Mary evidently saw it as sinister news. "Oh, me, oh, my!" she breathed.

"Do you think—" Mrs. Jaffrey hesitated.

"I think I ought to have gone home with her last night, instead of just putting her on the car," was the vigorous answer. "And after you've got work for her and everything—oh,

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she's certainly the limit, that girl. I'd let her go, if I was you."

Marise felt capable of deciding that point herself. "Do you know where she can be found?"

"Oh, I can find her, all right;" Mary spoke reluctantly. "Mrs. Jaffrey, I guess you don't know what you're up against. I've seen a lot of girls, first and last, and, believe me—"

Marise interrupted. It was ridiculous how this nice, wholesome, cock-sure girl could irritate her. "I am really anxious to find her. If it is not troubling you too much—"

"Oh, don't you worry about that. I like trouble—lap it up," the irrepressible good humor responded. "I'll get on her trail tonight, and let you know the worst as soon as I can. Of course, she might be sick. I hope to goodness it's that. Say, Mrs. Jaffrey—"

"Well?"

"A good, quick, fatal sickness wouldn't be the worst thing that could happen to May. When I thought it over, last night, I was real glad that she—well—you know what I mean."

"Yes." The little word closed that topic. "Then you will let me know?"

"I sure will!" The very hanging up of the

receiver sent a wave of hearty kindness over the wire.

At six o'clock the next night Mary Healy came with her news. May had been waylaid by a certain Charley before she reached home, and the city had again swallowed her up.

"I got her away from this fellow once before, and now she won't even see me," Mary was sorry and subdued. "Oh, Mrs. Jaffrey, wouldn't you think a girl with two eyes in her head would know better?"

Marise was looking fixedly at Mary's own fine eyes, gray and wide apart under a lovely forehead. When they were lifted to her earnestly, like this, they were disturbing. "She looks like Aunt Ellen," she told herself, to crowd out another thought. "It is a race resemblance, that's all—Irish blood." And she forced her gaze away; but it kept stealing back.

"You don't look at all like your mother," she said suddenly.

A surprising flush rose in the girl's face. Evidently her ease was not the impregnable thing it had seemed, and Marise liked her better for that moment of embarrassment. The averted, "No," was almost inaudible.

"You are not so tall," she added, with a smile.

Mary's head jerked up. "I like mama's bigness," she declared belligerently. "I think she's perfectly splendid."

"So do I," was the disarming answer. "She is like a super-woman, a little bigger than mortal. I thought her magnificent."

Mary flushed again, and smiled apology. "You see, the kids say things at her on the streets, and it does make me so hopping," she explained. "You know the sort of smarty things—'How's the weather up there?' and all that. Mama don't care; she laughs at me minding it so. I used to go and swat them for it when I was younger. And I'd like to do it now. Mama's such a perfect corker, Mrs. Jaffrey!"

"And she thinks rather well of you;" Marise spoke amusedly, and the girl laughed.

"I guess we're a mutual admiration society," she said, rising. "Well, here's May's address, if you want it; but she's like spilt water, that girl. There's nothing to pick her up by." She said good night and went as far as the door; there she hesitated. "Say, Mrs. Jaffrey!"

"Well?"

Mary tried to get something out, but it would not come. "Oh, well—I wish I could have been any use to you," she muttered, and left without further ceremony.

Marise dined with May Laguna's address staring up at her beside her plate. To look up the girl seemed hopeless as well as unspeakably distasteful. Her Mary! It was too impossible. After dinner she called up Hugh to tell him so. He was out, so she left a message for him to call her when he came in, then tried to settle down to a book; but last night's restlessness was on her again. All her self-control could do no more than keep her body still; her mind was out in the bleak world, seeking her child.

The eternal mystery of it! She pieced together for the millionth time the few bald facts that had been unearthed. A cab had taken Arnold, Mona and the baby to the Long Island ferry at East Thirty-fourth Street; thence some one, probably Arnold, had called up a quiet inn that they both knew at the other end of the island, and found it not yet open for the season. An acquaintance, taking the next boat, had passed the three in the station, presumably going the same way. Arnold had spent at least

one of the next two nights at his duck club on the south shore. No other members had been there, but the stores and one of the beds had been used and the fire made more than once, and Arnold had boarded the ill-fated train from the flag station that was only a mile or two distant from the rough shelter. There was no evidence that any one had been at the club with him. In going there, he must have got down unnoticed in the crowd at some larger station and tramped across country. It had seemed so certain that Mona and the baby were established near by that priceless time had been lost making a quiet search of the island. The trail had grown faint when the public was called in to help.

Mona Molloy had been with the Jaffreys only a few days, but she had been for four years a friend's perfect treasure, and had left Mrs. Thayer only because some trouble with her heart had made the place too hard. She had been a quiet reserved girl, kind and faithful, but not given to speech, mixing little with other servants, careful of her language and appearance, hostile to any attentions from such men as crossed her path—a really superior per-

son; and the only hint of mystery was that no relatives had ever come forward to claim her. They had had no photograph of her to publish, but her name and description had gone all over Ireland as well as America. The Jaffrey servants had testified that she had been troubled and preoccupied, those few days, and one morning Hannah had found her crying, but Mona had explained that she was worried about her health.

Mrs. Jaffrey herself had scarcely been aware of the girl, except as a relief from care, for the trouble with Arnold had been rising to its stormy climax, and the days were full of scenes and wrath and tears. That Mona should have done what Arnold said was natural enough. Knowing him, Marise knew just the fine high tone he would have taken. No doubt he had said that it was the doctor's orders: that the child's mother was hysterical and must have a few days of perfect quiet. The doctor had been in only the day before, to deal with a raging headache—and Arnold could make anything sound plausible and high-minded to one who did not know him. Marise could hear his very words:

"Mrs. Jaffrey has every confidence in you, Mona, knowing what you have been to Mrs. Thayer all these years, and she must be spared the excitement of saying good-by. It is only for a few days, but in her state—" Oh, Arnold would have made it seem a noble performance to the end; he would have frightened that word "separation" out of her thoughts without once brandishing his threat. And there he had lain, dead—with the careful high-mindedness wiped out of his face, leaving it meaningless. Marise, kneeling beside him in the baggage room to which the body had been carried, had clutched his shoulders as though to force the secret from him; but the touch of death had shocked and stilled her and she had shrunk away. Never again for love or hate had he mattered to her. She had no room in her heart for anything but the frantic question: "Where is she? Where is my baby?"

"Mr. Le Baron, m'am," said Hannah disapprovingly from the doorway.

"It was as easy to run up as to call up," Hugh explained, coming in. "I was afraid something had happened."

Marise looked at him dazedly. She had been living so poignantly in the past that for the moment she could not place the present.

"Oh—oh, yes, Hugh!" she said.

"You were asleep," he declared, sitting on the arm of the nearest chair and holding his hat on his knee. It was his nice way of acknowledging that he had not actually been invited, and would go any instant.

His coming had lifted her out of the old horrors, into the quiet disciplined to-day, and in her relief she could have clung to him.

"Oh, I wanted your advice," she said, coolly friendly, as always. "It is this May Laguna that you worried me about. She didn't appear yesterday, and I find that she has gone her appointed way. She is hopeless, poor little rag. And if she were traced to my door-step, she would not be my Mary. It is physically impossible. Do you still think I ought to investigate?"

"Oh, what I think—!" He rose to wander about the room, then laid down his hat and seated himself facing her. "I was advising you from your own point of view," he explained. "Personally, I think you ought to cut this

search off short, investigate no one, run away from the name of Mary!"

"But why? I am only doing the natural thing!"

"No, this isn't natural. It's obsession." His anger rose a little, as it was apt to do at any difference of belief. "You are throwing away the years, one after the other, in a quest that is perfectly hopeless, however it ends. The nine hundred and ninety-nine chances are that it ends in nothing, and the thousandth chance—oh, you say you have faced every aspect of it, but you haven't, you can't. You are going on a very noble and beautiful theory, but, I tell you, it won't work."

"It would not work with you," said Marise sadly. "You don't realize how different I am. You think I have all your shrinkings and resentments, and only pretend I haven't. That is not true. I have learned my big lesson. You can't and won't learn it, but until you at least acknowledge its bigness, Hugh, we're speaking different languages."

"Yes," was the dry answer. "I should describe them as truth and fiction, or as honesty and sentimentalism. Oh, the people! Listen

to them on the cars, have business dealings with them—”

“Does it ever occur to you,” she cut in, “that I am not thinking wholly of myself in this matter?”

“Neither am I,” was the unexpected answer. “I see the girl’s side of it, too—having to be made all over after she is grown up! You couldn’t let her alone, you know—you’d have to make her over, speech, manners, taste, morals, jokes—lord, the jokes! Look how restive children get under it, and then multiply that resentment a thousandfold—”

She put up her hands to stop the torrent. “Oh, Hugh, if you can’t help me, I wish you would stay away!” she cried.

She did not realize how hard she had struck until she saw his rigid face. He took up his hat and went at once to the door.

“If you don’t want candor, then I certainly can not be helpful,” he said savagely. At the portières he suddenly turned on her. “This is not temper, it is righteous wrath!” he flung back, and then the front door banged on him.

Marise dropped her face into her hands. “Oh, Hughie!” she breathed, between tears

and a broken laugh. She felt very sure that he would call up within twenty minutes.

Before that could happen, Hannah had admitted another visitor. Mary Healy came in downcast, almost shy, and, though cordially welcomed, took an uneasy seat and found difficulty in beginning. A tremor shook Marise, and she averted her eyes from the fine young face. The girl had no right to look so much like Aunt Ellen!

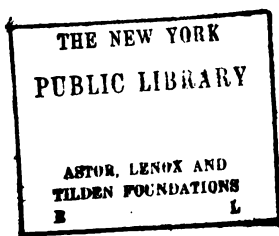
"Did you find out something more about May?" she asked, more coldly than she knew.

"No, Mrs. Jaffrey. I just came back to—to tell you something." Mary was recovering her powers, but not her spirits. "I dare say you'll think I'm a goat," she went on heavily, "but it's awful hard for me to tell the truth about mama. She and I are just everything to each other—I couldn't have loved my own mother one bit better, and I don't see why people have to know I was adopted, anyway; but when I—"

The voice was only a roaring in Marise's ears, and a warning numbness passed up her wrists. A line she had read somewhere—"If you are faint, tie your shoe!"—came to her aid,



"You say you were her sister's child," she repeated



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and she bent down as though to straighten the buckle of her slipper, her forehead almost touching her knee. After a few moments the faintness passed and the words began to reach her, but she could not at first put them together. Then a sentence leaped out at her:

"Being her own sister's child does make it different, Mrs. Jaffrey! We're relations, anyhow." More followed, but Marise again lost the thread. Mary must have become aware of her unresponsiveness, for she rose.

"I felt I'd kind of told you a lie," she apologized. "But I guess you think I'm an awful goat."

Marise tried to say, "Don't go!" but Mary was going, and she was too weak and shaken to reach her. Mary was at the door when Mrs. Jaffrey lifted a white face, in which the blue eyes burned black.

"You say you were her sister's child," she repeated. "Had—had you always lived together?"

"No, m'am." Mary appeared surprised. "That's what I was telling you—how my mother came on a visit with me, and died there in mama's house." She paused, but no more

questions followed from the still figure. "Well, my friend is waiting for me down-stairs," she excused herself, and went out.

Ten minutes later Hannah came in. "Mr. Le Baron on the telephone, m'am," she said.

Marise stared at her and rose, but she went past the telephone, up to her own room, and closed the door.

"Mrs. Jaffrey has gone to her room and asks to be excused," Hannah told Hugh, doing her social best by the situation.

III

THE clocks droned away the night. Marise, lying rigid, with racing pulses, told herself hourly that she was entirely cool and sensible: she quite recognized that the child of Mrs. Healy's sister could not very well be her child. There was a resemblance, or else she imagined one; she would do well to have a talk with Mrs. Healy, simply to set her mind at rest. She expected nothing whatever.

Detachment from her body was one of Marise's most prized attainments. Bit by bit, she had broken herself away from the ungovernable flesh. If she could not teach it not to suffer, she could at least sit aloof and ignore the turmoil. Even alone in the dark, except on rare nights of self-indulgence, she kept up the polite and friendly air with which she met the world. To-night a sudden light at any moment would have found her in the attitude of a lady composed for sleep, and if her blue eyes looked startlingly black, her tranquil eyebrows would have offered a flat contradiction.

The tempestuous heart of her girlhood would have broken her to pieces if she had not taken command. She had done her hard task so well that Hugh could tell her she had no heart—that she was as impersonal as nature. And perhaps it was nearly true, now; perhaps these secret disturbances were only the lingering reverberations of the former storms. Perhaps this anguish of suspense that she was so strongly ignoring was nothing more than an old habit. She admitted the possibility quite coolly, then had to catch back her arms, which had flung themselves out into the darkness, straining to reach her child.

“But I have not found Mary,” she reminded herself reasonably. “It is never true. I used to go through all this at every fresh clue—but the child was never Mary. It doesn’t come true. I quite recognize that. And now I am going to sleep.” But she was not. There were things that even her will could not accomplish.

The reluctant winter dawn came at last, and finally Hannah with a breakfast tray. She found Mrs. Jaffrey dressed for the street, but Hannah had one of her grievances, and the grievance code did not permit her to look sur-

prised. She would not even answer the automatic, "Good morning, Hannah," though a smile came with it, automatic, too, perhaps, but touchingly well meaning and weary. Marise was only vaguely aware of the chill, but as she set out she felt an exhausted need of a kind voice and a steadying hand.

"One does have to do a good many hard things by one's self," she admitted. It was as near as she ever came to a complaint.

The crisp morning air felt good on her hot forehead and heavy lids, and Marise walked across the park, traversing various morning streams of people, all pouring down into the city. They looked at her, even turning back for a second look. She was well dressed, but not more so than hundreds they would pass, and her face, colorless but for the sudden blue of her eyes, was not what they would have called beautiful. And yet they felt her important, "somebody." The graceful bearing that had never cost her a thought, her perfect unawareness of them, the subtle marks of an intense experience — no doubt there were many contributing causes, but above all, clear and distinguished, shone out the fact that she was

a lady. And though most of those who passed would have protested furiously if they or theirs had been denied that title, they must have admitted that she wore it with a difference. Even here she was set apart—she who believed so hotly that she had passed all the barriers that separate the few from the multitude.

She was unconscious of them, and yet, in a way, she was thinking of them, thinking of other lives in contrast to her own. They wanted so many things—sport, amusement, travel, art, things she had gone after as keenly as any one until sixteen years ago. She had once been a very good tennis player, but since that black day the thought of a racket in her hand had been inconceivable. She had danced miles in her youth, but when the new steps had drawn all the women of her generation back into the ballrooms, she had looked on in puzzled wonder, with a patient “What for? Why do you want to do it?” when their enthusiasm tried to draw her in. She had seldom paused to realize what her own life had become, but the sleepless, disciplined night, which had finally succeeded in leaving her heart quite cold and dead,

seemed to have illuminated her brain. She saw in the austerity of her life a new significance.

"They want all those other things because they want love," she decided. "When you put sex out of your life, put it violently before its natural end, you put other things out with it. Little desires, appeals to the senses. The body, in fact. I have been disembodied. It must show, sooner or later. Shall I seem spiritual, or merely bleak? I have been one-ideal, of course—obsessed, as Hugh calls it. That means I have narrowed. Yes, narrowed. Oh, I have gone out into a bigger world, but I have taken one narrow path through it. And yet, if I had stayed more—human . . . well, then there would be Hugh. And that can't be. He almost pushed in, but I put him out. I don't want him now. That is over." She paused to let a couple of women on horseback trot past. They looked very gay in their boots and breeches and flying coat-skirts. They were about her own age. And she had loved riding as a girl.

"But I couldn't bother to do that," she realized. A stray line from some poem came into her head: "'I had forgotten all about the spring.'

That is it," she decided, "I have forgotten the spring. And now I shall never remember it." But her heart refused to care.

The Healys lived in a model tenement, as one might have known that they would: Mary Healy's air of joyous success implied a background of modern conveniences. She would be at her office by this time, but Mrs. Healy, in a fresh and suitable morning gown, would be putting the flat in order. Marise, getting her breath outside on the landing, could hear the heavy step within, and a gigantic humming.

At her knock, the humming stopped, and there was a pause while Mrs. Healy tied on a fresh white apron. One hand was still settling its starchy exuberance when the other opened the door.

"Well, Mrs. Jaffrey!" She was heartily cordial, and bigger than ever in this crowded little room. Probably never did a small room hold so many things, every one of them exquisitely clean and perfectly in place. The lace curtains were as stiff and luminous as Mrs. Healy's apron, the Victrola and the Morris chair had a dark, polished gleam, the very buttons of the green plush sofa had been freshly brushed

about, and the flock of prints, lithographs and Christmas cards that swept the bright green walls could show every one a shining morning face. No need to pull forward a chair: one was already placed in the best company position, beside a mahogany-colored table of two complete stories with several balustraded half stories in between. Mrs. Healy seated herself opposite and palpably expected something nice for Mary.

Mrs. Jaffrey had planned to approach the subject through the problem of May Laguna, but steam pipes throbbing at her elbow gave out an overpowering heat, accompanied by a smell of frying gold paint, and her strained nerves, crying out for space and coolness, hurried her past preliminaries. Her errand had become a mere formality, to be put through as quickly as possible.

"Mrs. Healy," she began, "Mary told me last night that she is not your own daughter; that she was your sister's little girl and you adopted her."

Mrs. Healy's face showed a subtle stiffening, and she straightened in her chair. "Yes, m'am," she said with a slight change of tone.

Marise knew that she ought to propitiate, ought to say something of the great love that Mary showed for her adopted mother, but the heat was making her giddy and she could not stop.

"I am so interested in Mary. Will you tell me about her own father and mother?"

Mrs. Healy folded her great arms across her chest and turned on her guest a level watchful eye.

"Her mother was my own sister, m'am. Bridget Flammer was her name before she—I never set eyes on Mary's father. He died when Mary was a year old."

Marise loosened her furs. She had lost her breath again, as she had on the stairs. "And then your sister came back to you?"

"No, m'am." The words closed like a door between them, but Marise had to push on.

"Mary said that she died in your house."

"She did. She came to visit me, and she died."

"How long was that after her husband's death?"

A hard red rose to Mrs. Healy's temples; her voice tightened ominously. "Will you tell me

why you come here prying into my girl's birth? If you've anything to say against her, I'd thank you to say it out."

Marise, seeing what she had done, cried out against it. "Oh, no, no! You have quite misunderstood!" She forced herself to pour out friendliness as she did on the girls who came to tea with her. "You know how interested I am in all girls. And Mary looks so like—she has a lovely face. I simply wanted to know about her when she was a baby. She must have been very dear and very beautiful."

Mrs. Healy had softened and opened. "Ah, she was a little rose! She was over two when I first saw her, for I will confess to you, m'am, that my sister and I had been estranged for many years. And then I—well, I sought her. I put an advertisement in the papers. And four nights later I heard a wagon drive up, and I went to the door with the lamp, and there was Bridget with the little girl by the hand. I'll never forget my first sight of her—my sister dressed her very fine, and she looked up out of her lace cap so sweet and so sleepy with the journey! I've got the cap and the coat still, a little white corduroy—"

Marise had risen. "Show them to me!" she commanded, so sharply that the other rose automatically to obey. Then she stopped, sending a look of stern question at the averted face. "Show them to me!" Marise repeated.

Mrs. Healy went into the adjoining bedroom; and a drawer creaked. When she came back, her face was pale and set above the tissue-paper of a soft package. Within was a yellowing lace cap and a white corduroy coat, its silk lining starred with faded pink roses. For a blurred moment, Marise believed that this was only the eternally recurring dream, and groped blindly for some reality. Her hand tried to touch the cloak.

"Lord Christ, you're Mardie!" said a choked voice over her head. Strong arms caught her as she fell forward.

In a moment Marise was conscious again, trying to raise herself on her elbow from the sofa where she had been laid. Mrs. Healy pressed her back and bathed her forehead with shaken hands.

"I did the fair thing," she kept saying. "I did, Mrs. Jaffrey. I put the death in all the

papers. I gave you every chance. I wanted the little girl fit to break my heart, but I gave you every chance I knew how. And I had an equal right. A mother's sister is as close as a father's sister. But I knew you'd loved the little thing by the way she cried for Mardie, and—" Her voice was stricken into silence and her ministering hand fell. She shrank away. "Lord Christ!" she said again. "You lost your own child. Mrs. Jaffrey, 'twas your own child you lost."

She sank into a chair, dropping her face into her hands. Marise could wait now. She told herself, over and over, "*Mary is found*," but her heart lay cold and dead within her. How she had dreamed of this moment! She had placed it in a thousand settings, but always her part had been ecstasy and tears and longing arms held out. Now she was glad only that she could lie down. It was all so drearily commonplace.

At last Mrs. Healy lifted her head. There were great feelings in that great body. Her face was ravaged, broken; but her iron will kept her voice strong.

"How did your child go? Mary told me there was a nurse girl went with her."

"Yes." To speak was like trying to lift an impossibly heavy weight, but Mrs. Healy wanted more, and Marise dragged at it. "Mona Molloy. We never—found her."

"What did she look like?"

The old printed description floated before Marise's eyes, but to repeat it was beyond her strength. She closed her eyes with a murmur of helplessness, but Mrs. Healy inexorably drew the facts out of her one by one. The last question came from behind a shielding hand:

"What kind of a girl was she?"

Marise felt the dread in it and tried to hasten her answer. "Good. Good and faithful. Well conducted. We traced her back for eleven years, and there was not one thing against her. She had steadily bettered herself."

"Oh, glory be to God!" Mrs. Healy rested on that for a while, took it in with heavy breaths. Then her head jerked up. "But did she steal the child?"

"Oh, no, no. She was—entrusted with her. We don't quite know. The child's father—entrusted—"

Mrs. Healy was too intent on her own part in the story to wonder. "I see it now," she said at last. "I see it all. You've been done a cruel wrong, Mrs. Jaffrey, but not by me, and not meaningly by my poor sister. I'll tell it to you from the beginning. . . . That was when Bridget came straight from the ship to me. She wasn't to go out to service; we held ourselves a bit above that. The farm was doing well, and we'd planned she should look about her a while and then perhaps learn a trade, like nursing. She was ten years younger than me, and she'd been like my own child." The telling grew harder, but the unshaken voice plowed on. "She was a sweet-faced girl, seventeen, and Tim—well, my husband was a good man, in his way, but he was easy and careless, and I was hard on him. I've known that since—I was hard on him. I saw nothing, and Bridget was afraid to tell me. And then one night I stayed with a dying neighbor, and I came back just before the dawn, bringing their girl with me—and Tim was coming out of—"

"Yes, I understand," said Mrs. Jaffrey, trying in pity to bridge that night. But Mrs. Healy sternly went on with it.

"No, m'am, you do not. I thought I understood, and I went into a great wrath, and I made Bridget dress and leave my house, there before the neighbor's girl. And Tim kept telling me that she was innocent, but I wouldn't hear him. And Bridget said no word, but went away down the path and out the gate with her bag in her hand, and I thought then that she was brazen, but I know now that she was proud—proud and angry and hurt past bearing. All those years she carried that hurt, and that wish to punish me—oh, I see that now, I see that now! Tim told me many times that I did Bridget a wrong, and when he was dying he told me more—and then I had to believe him. He had been mad for Bridget, and perhaps he had made her love him, but she was true, and when he went in to her that night, she talked to him and sent him away. And then I drove her out, and her seventeen, and a stranger in the country."

Difficult tears forced their way through the numbness that lay on Marise like a dead weight. "How you must have suffered!" she murmured.

"Yes, m'am. I had been hard before. I had said, 'Let her go her own way, since she has chosen that way.' But after Tim's death I was changed like. What the dying tell you is not forgot. And Tim said that I had been a hard woman, even in my love—that it was a yoke, and not a crown of happiness. And then I sat alone with what he'd told me, night after night, when he was gone. The farm was a lonesome place, and the man slept in the barn, so there was none but myself in the house. Every night I sat down with it."

She forgot to go on until Marise reminded her. "And then you advertised. Where was the farm?"

"In New Jersey, about an hour and a half out on the train. I put the notice in all the city papers. It said 'Bridget Flammer—Tim is dead and your sister Norah begs you to come home.' I hadn't much hope. And what kind of a woman she'd be if she did come—I had to face that."

"I know," said Marise.

"And four nights later, like I told you—oh, I see it all. She wanted to come back like a lady, with her fine little girl by the hand. All

those years she'd been brooding on it—how she'd rise in the world and make me sorry. Poor child, she was kind of innocent, for all her experience. The lie didn't come so easy when she was face to face with her old Norah. She had seen it like a stage piece—her cheeks were on fire, and she kind of swept in with her chin in the air.

“I've just come out for a couple of days, Norah,” she says. “I don't know how it will agree with my little girl, who's never had anything but the very best.” And she went on like that about her being a widow and well provided for, and sort of turning up her nose at everything, yet all the time uneasy and unnatural, poor child, poor child! And of course she got my back up, so I said nothing about how I'd sorrowed and changed, and pretty soon she went to her bed.

“After I'd shut the door on her, I sat down to think, and then it come over me for the first time that she hadn't a wedding ring. I'd been so taken back before, I hadn't got round to it—but there her hand was, as clear as day before me, and no ring on it at all. I rose up to go in and tell her what she was, and then I

says to myself, 'Who made her that?' and I sat down again. Oh, Mrs. Jaffrey, 'twas a dark hour. And it has only just this day ended—for you tell me she was a good girl, and well conducted. Glory be to God, I didn't do that to her!" She sobbed at last, but only for a moment.

"Well, m'am, I thought it over half the night, till there was nothing but love and sorrow in my heart, and then I went in to tell her so, treading softly, not to wake the little girl. I had a candle in my hand, and I saw that her eyes were wide open.

"'Bridget,' I says, 'I've come to ask your pardon.' I think she heard me—oh, I've prayed to God that she heard me. Something looked back at me from her eyes. But she did not speak, and then I saw she was a terrible color, and I heard her hard breathing. I carried the little girl into my room, then I went out to the barn and woke up Olaf and sent him for the doctor. It was two hours before he got there, and I kept feeling that the poor child wanted to say something. She died before daybreak. . . .

"Well, I never for a minute doubted that it was Bridget's child. She'd called her mama—"

"No." Marise spoke sharply. "Momo. That was her way of saying Mona."

"To be sure, to be sure. Mona Molloy, you say it was. She must have taken the name the day I drove her out, lest the disgrace follow her. Momo. Perhaps that gave her the idea. Perhaps she started just to come as she was, and then thought of that on the train, and didn't get round to thinking of the ring. Poor soul, poor soul! And when the little thing asked for Mardie, Bridget says it was her husband's sister, that she lived with. She'd given his name as Walsh, Thomas Walsh. I put it that way in the papers, Bridget Flammer Walsh, widow of Thomas Walsh. For she had said she was a widow, and perhaps the ring could have been explained. I thought I had a right to go by her spoken word, with her dead. I put my own ring on her hand before the doctor came. It was buried with her, and I bought me another when I could. I gave her back her good name in the neighborhood, and I never told my doubts to any one. They were my own."

Marise dragged herself up, her palms pressing her throbbing temples. "But why we

didn't find you!" she exclaimed. "How such a search as we made—"

"But, Mrs. Jaffrey, I'd lived twenty years in that community; I had what they call a standing. Who would look in my house for a lost child? The man who drove Bridget up from the station, the doctor, Olaf—they'd all known her as a girl, eleven years before. She was Bridget Flammer to them. And then little Mary, it wasn't a week before she came down with the scarlet fever—oh, she was terrible sick, and the house was in quarantine, and though neighbors left the weekly paper for me, I didn't read it, and I talked to no one. I never rightly knew the story of your child, though I heard it spoken of now and again. Night and day I nursed the little thing, and when at last we brought her through, well and sound, she looked like another child, older and different. I knew then it would break my heart to let her go. And I never went to sleep without thinking, 'Maybe that Mardie will be out in the morning, and the child will turn to her, and I'll have to give her up.' Night and day, for years and years, the thought never wholly left me. With that fear in my heart, I made myself

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over, bit by bit—for I'd been a hasty woman when I was crossed. But I says, 'She's got to love me better than that Mardie.' It was never mama she cried for, but always Mardie. And when I saw how she shrank at a rough word, I never gave her another, not to this day. She's had every chance I could offer her, and when she was twelve years old, I sold the farm and moved here, that she could have high school and everything. She's been my life, Mrs. Jaffrey. And I'm dear to her—I can say that. I'm dear to her."

"Yes," said Marise. The issue hung silent between them until Mrs. Healy started up.

"We'd both be better for a cup of tea," she said, and went out, closing the door.

Marise turned swiftly to the little coat and cap, lying on a chair. She had held her eyes away, longing to get her hands on them, but unwilling that any one should witness the moment. She knelt beside them, spreading them out so that she had before her the veritable sheath of her baby, and as her hands followed the little shape that seemed to lurk within, the old ache for Mary flamed in a passionate desire for her baby—not a grown, strange daughter,

but her baby in her arms. She cradled the coat, rocked it against her breast, sobbed into its folds. All the cool training of years fell away. Her body was like a clock that had been stopped, and now, started again, went on inexorably from that hour, heedless of the time that had run by while it waited.

Mrs. Healy was a long time boiling her kettle. When she came back with the tray, she found Marise sitting stiffly on the sofa. Neither looked at the other as they drank their tea. Then, with the putting down of her cup, Mrs. Healy made the first move.

"Mrs. Jaffrey, Mary is your child. There's no question of that. But there's things I'd ask you to consider." Her voice was quiet and reasonable. Evidently she had used her half-hour for hard thinking. "Mary in our way of living is just at the top of the tree. She's a leader. Girls come to her to tell them what to do, and the boys are after her like bees. Down at the office they think the world of her, and she loves her work, she's proud of it. She's a little queen. Now you take her away into your life—she don't know your ways. She's the equal of anybody on this earth, if I do say

it—but in little things maybe she don't do and say just what you'd think right. And then you'd try to tell her better— isn't that true?"

Marise was tensely on guard. "I should be most tender of her feelings," she said.

"Yes, m'am, you would so. But the fact would be there that you wanted her different, and Mary's never been criticized. She's not used to that. She'll feel like she was being put down, and she'll not like it. She'll not be happy."

Hugh had said the same thing, and Marise recognized its force. "I will give up any idea of making her different," she promised gravely. "I will take her just as she is. That will be best."

Mrs. Healy bent forward, shaking a significant forefinger. "But will your friends take her so? Will their girls chum with her and their young men ask her out? Answer me that."

It was a hard question to meet. "Mary will make friends, wherever she is," Marise said. "I think in time, a very little time, she will adjust herself to new surroundings and find her way."

"And she's to leave all her old friends and see them no more?"

"No. Certainly not. They will be welcome to come all they like." Marise tried to speak heartily, but both women knew better.

"Ah, but will they do it?" was the triumphant answer. "They can lark about my kitchen here, and make fudge, and go off to the movies as they please—will it be like that at your place?"

Marise suddenly brushed aside argument, literally, with her hand. "Mrs. Healy, Mary is my child. I have been hunting her for sixteen years. I am sorry, deeply sorry, for you—I'm sorry for her. But here we are. I have found my daughter."

The hard red showed again on Mrs. Healy's cheek-bones. "'Twas me sat up with her, night after night, and saved her life because I wouldn't let her die—the doctor said 'twas my will that saved her. I didn't have my clothes off for days together. I gave her back her life."

"I have sat up with her, too," was the quiet answer. "Night after night, Mrs. Healy, I sat up with her, all alone, thinking, 'Is she alive? Is she ragged and dirty? Do they ill treat her?"

Oh, I have sat up with her for sixteen lonely years!"

Mrs. Healy would not be moved. She folded defensive arms. "With the thought of her, yes; but she's grown into my child. She's mine now, not yours. She'll fling herself down on me like a pup. Can she do that to you, or will you frost the heart out of her? Tell me that."

Marise started up, anger in her deepened voice. "What are you asking? That I go away and give up my child? Make no claim to her?"

Mrs. Healy rose to her terrible height. "Why should you come here spoiling a happy home?" she cried violently. "What's Mary to you or you to Mary? You can set your mind at rest about her. She'll be well cared for, and my bit of property will keep her. Now, why can't you go back to your own life and leave us be? That's it—look down your nose like I was your servant—you'll look at Mary like that some day, and will she ever forgive you? She will not. You think I'm selfish, no doubt, but what are you? God knows, you're not thinking of Mary in all this. Not of her happiness. She's the happiest girl in the world right now. What do you want to come here for, spoiling every-

thing? Oh, I sound angry, but it's plain sense I'm telling you. You'd best go home and stay there."

The woman towered over Marise, the loud voice was torture, the heat set the pictures on the walls swaying before her eyes. With a desperate hand at her temple, she turned and went out.

At first she walked blindly, anywhere, to get away; then, as the welcome cold steadied her senses, she awoke to the fact that she was being stared at. Passers-by even stopped, to get a longer look at the naked suffering in her face. It was horrible, as shameful as those dreams in which one goes publicly unclothed. To hide pain was the most imperative instinct of her being. She found a taxicab and shrank into its corner. Oh, the welcome shelter of home, its cool peace! Marise ran to it in spirit as a lost child runs to its mother.

On the hall table was a florist's box, breathing fragrance. Hugh had found that rare thing, violets with a true violet odor. There were penitent words written on his card, but Marise did not try to understand them; she had forgotten last night. She placed the violets be-

side her as she threw herself on the drawing-room couch—no other room was big enough for her need. Body and soul, she had come to the limit of exhaustion. In that moment, while the relief of being home was all that she could feel, she fell asleep.

Hour after hour she slept. The end of her search seemed to have relaxed the tension of years, and she slept as she had not since her girlhood, fathoms deep, broken to bits, every limb a separate dead weight. Usually a step past her door, the stirring of a curtain, roused her, but now Hannah could come in and stand anxiously beside her without troubling her rest. All day she lay there while Hannah watched and kept away sounds and wondered.

The room was nearly dark when Marise woke up. It was a long process, with many slippings back. First she was aware of an exquisite pleasantness; soon this defined itself as Hugh's violets and the freshness of the great beautiful room, newly precious to her, as if she had lately escaped from oppressive confinement. Then she felt a stirring warmth in her arms and breast, as though she had been holding her baby.

"I must have dreamed of Mary—" The thought had barely taken shape when the living truth was upon her. The long search was over. And Mary, found, was good and happy and beautiful; evil had not touched her, her life had been rich in love. There were no words for it but Mrs. Healy's cry—"Glory be to God!" Marise said it over and over—"Oh, glory be to God!" Evil and filth were still out there in the world, and she must struggle against them till she died, for the sake of all the children of men; but the dark pictures that had hung just back of every waking moment of her life could be torn down and swept out, for they had dealt with the body and soul of little Mary Jaffrey.

"You're awake, m'am?" Hannah had forgotten the morning's grievance, and her tone was solicitous. She carried a tea tray. "I was going to take the liberty of waking you up, for I got uneasy."

Marise looked remotely at the dim shape, then, as the odor of fresh toast reached her, she abruptly sat up.

"Why, Hannah, I am starved," she said. Her voice was like a girl's; a note of laughter thrilled in it, a singing richness. She felt Han-

nah's stare, and tried to rub the betraying gladness out of her face with her palms. She was not ready to tell any one yet, not even Hugh. "Light only the candles," she said. "My eyes aren't really open. I didn't sleep at all last night, not one moment, but I seem to have made up for it. Thank you, Hannah—this is so good. You do take beautiful care of me." Her voice had run away with her again; it fairly caroled. Hannah's glance fell on the violets, and a look of shocked intelligence froze her Victorian features. She left the room without answering.

All her life Marise was to remember the next half-hour. There was darkness behind it, difficulty ahead, but for this little space she knew what is called ecstasy. The old bad dream was gone, and the reality set her in a flood of sunlight, woke all the music of the world, from the woods to the cathedrals, melted the hard mold into which she had forced her being and let it stream out into the living universe. The very hunger of her body, the goodness of tea and toast, were part of the rapture. The violets made her cry with their deliciousness. The thought of telling Hugh brought the tenderest laughter. All her senses were stirring, and the

forgotten pulse of youth was beating out the measure that she had moved to before the clock had stopped. For her child was found, found good and happy. Oh, glory be to God!

She had not noticed the door-bell or Hannah's muttered announcement, but, suddenly aware of a shadow, she looked up to find Mrs. Healy standing over her. The candles in the tall iron standard showed a tragic face, and Marise, not knowing whether she had come in peace or in war, waited for her to speak.

Mrs. Healy sank into a chair as though she had taken the last possible step. "You're right," she said heavily. "I was a fool."

"Ah, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" Marise spoke in a deepened voice, a warm hand held out, and Mrs. Healy looked at her in dull surprise.

"You can't help it," she said shortly. "There's no help for it now on all this green earth. It's started, and it's got to go on. She's your child, and I couldn't keep it from her. There's the point. She's got to know." Her chin sank on her breast. Her bigness seemed to make her grief colossal, and Marise could find no comfort to offer.

"She can take her choice," Mrs. Healy pres-

ently went on. "She's free. She loves me dearly, but she's a girl, and you're a fine lady in a grand home, and with the romance and all—well, it's easy to see which way she'll go. I don't blame her. She'd be happier as she is, but the poor child can't know it. She'll choose you."

Marise had only a perplexed frown for that. When mother and child found each other, how could there be any question of choice? But the woman was desperately unhappy, and needed all possible patience.

"Mrs. Healy, you won't lose Mary's love, you can't," she began, but the other cut her short.

"Can you share your husband with another wife? Then no more can you share your child with another mother. She's mine or she's yours. Oh, she'll come to see me, I've no doubt, and bring me fine presents, but there'll be nothing I can do for her. And I've done for her day and night, I've made every stitch she wears, made it fine and nice, and had her shirt-waists always sweet and fresh, so that they speak of it at the office—she's never lacked what I could give her. Now I'll go home and fold my hands. It's over."

"But you have had sixteen years of happiness," Marise reminded her, very gently, "while I have been—" she broke off with a shiver. "Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

"No more than it would mean to you, Mrs. Jaffrey, if the light of your life was taken from you. No woman ever yet stood by her child's coffin and said, 'Well, I've had sixteen years of her, so I'm content.' "

"Not when it was death," Marise assented. "But suppose Mary had married? That must have happened, sooner or later, and she would have gone from your house then."

Mrs. Healy had only contempt for such feeble arguments. "How far would she go? To the flat above. When we found it was empty, she made a joke of it—she must marry soon, so it wouldn't get taken by any one else. She was fooling about it last Sunday night with Henry Martin, and they went up to look at it for the joke of the thing. 'I'll never go any farther than that from mama,' she said. And then I'd have had her babies to do for. Oh, you think I'm selfish, but you pull away a piece of the living flesh, and there'll be crying. Don't offer me comfort, for there's none."

"Oh, I wish there were," said Marise miserably. "When I think what you have been to my poor baby—Mrs. Healy, I could go on my knees to you in gratitude. It is a horrible return, to hurt you like this."

Mrs. Healy was beyond the reach of words. "You'll have to tell her, that's all," she said, rising. "I can't. I can't do it. I'll send her to you to-night, after her dinner. You can tell her what you please." And she went out, leaving Marise to feel humbled and wretchedly inadequate.

"Why couldn't I have met her in some bigger way?" she tormented herself. "Her selfishness was finer than my sympathy—it could let go, it could fill the whole room. It was like something in the Bible. Lamentations. And I could only say stupid little sentences about Mary's love. What was the matter?"

She thought that she had failed in pity and in kindness, not seeing that it was the pity and the kindness that were at fault. Only human reality could have helped. If Marise could have shown the depths of her own past suffering, forced Mrs. Healy to see her side, wrestled with her, shouted at her till she heard, they would



"You'll have to tell her, that's all," she said. "I can't——"

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have parted sisters; but she had hidden for so long, she did not know how to let go. Hugh's candid hostility to the proletariat was more truly democratic than her kindness, for he did not hide himself. Marise did not recognize this, but she felt that he would have done better than she had, and longed to run to him for help. It did not occur to her, however, to thank him for the violets.

After dinner Hugh called her up, but it was time for Mary to be there, and she could not go to the telephone.

"I can't talk to any one," she said obliviously. "I am expecting a girl to see me, Hannah. Don't admit any one else." And she went on pacing the big room, trying to control her fever of impatience.

Years ago, when she had learned to bear suspense, learned to close up her heart and sit stoically through interminable journeys, following some clue that might lead to her child, Marise had acquired a formula: "It will be true or it won't; nothing I feel now can make it different, so suppose I stop feeling." It had taught her a specious quiet, and to-night, from old habit, she turned to it; then she broke off,

flung it away forever. "It is true, and nothing I feel can undo it—so suppose I feel to the very depths!" she cried. The old "I must not!" was outworn, too. "Why mustn't I? Mary is found!"

And yet she presently needed all her patience, for the evening was passing, and Mary did not come. She might have worked late at the office; that idea helped for a little while. Then nine o'clock struck, and half past, and Marise grew frightened. At first she thought only of the daily accidents in the city streets. Then an absurd vision of Mrs. Healy, respectable property owner though she was, packing a bag and disappearing with the girl, rose to torment her. She could not keep it argued down.

"If Mary is not here by ten, I will go there," she decided, and watched the clock. It was five minutes before ten when the door-bell rang.

Marise wanted to run to the door, but she literally could not do it. She could only cling to a chair-back and wait. There were sounds in the hall, an opening door, a slow step. Then Mary came between the portières, stopping short as they fell together behind her.

She must have cried terribly, for her face

was distorted, her lids swollen and fiery, but that was well over; her mouth had a firm, even a grim line, and her eyes looked straight into her mother's. For sixteen years Marise had lived and relived this moment, when she should start forward to receive her child, and the joy of the dream came to help her now, reminding her that she must be warm and glad, and not the paralyzed empty thing that she felt. When she had crossed the big room and laid her hands on her child's shoulders, it began a little to come true. Her heart quivered into life.

"My little girl," she said, and laid her cheek very gently against Mary's.

The girl stood motionless and unresponsive, sullen even, and Marise had to crush down her rising tenderness, dreading to frighten and repel. Mary had not been looking for her all these years! She kissed her forehead and drew her over to the couch.

"I see that you know," she said.

Mary's lips were unlocked with difficulty. "Yes. I made mama tell me," she jerked out, sitting physically contracted, as though in terror of some bodily demand. Marise moved from the couch to the chair opposite.

"It must have been a dreadful shock," she admitted, trying to win confidence by quiet speech; but she had overestimated her own strength. She could not go on. Mary could not or would not help. When the silence had grown unbearable, Marise lifted her head and began again. "You understand . . . how it happened? And I didn't know you at once . . . that is the strange thing. Not to know you! It was only at the second visit that I . . ."

Mary was not listening. She had come to deliver some speech that needed all her will and courage, and she was visibly preparing them. Dread of what it might be drove Marise on.

"It was strange that you should have brought May Laguna to me;" she was pleading with Mary to remember all that joyous romance. "It was like something in a story, then. But when it is true, and happens to yourself, the story feeling . . . Mary, it is true! It seems unbelievable, but we must learn to believe it. Oh, I know—"

"Mrs. Jaffrey," Mary broke in, her voice wooden with the effort, "I came to tell you that—that it doesn't matter if it is true. I can't leave mama. She's my real mother. I like my,

home, I like my own life. I don't want any change."

Marise had tried to face every human possibility, but never once had she thought of this—that her child might refuse her. Mary must have seen the white shock in her face, for her voice rose defiantly as she plunged on.

"I can't help it. It's just plain deserting mama, and I can't do it. If you'd seen her—! She tells me to—she's game, all right. We've been at it all the evening. Oh, we've had an awful time. I don't see any reason that I have to. I wouldn't be any comfort to you, Mrs. Jaffrey—a rough-neck like me. Why can't you just let us alone?"

The long years of hiding gave Marise what she believed was priceless help. After a blind moment, she gathered herself together and spoke as quietly and reasonably as though she had been a judge on a bench. Self-control was to her the first law of conduct, and she did not suspect how frosty and aloof she seemed. If she could have uttered her hurt and her longing, she must have broken down a barrier that was half bewilderment; but she hid herself and talked of Mary.

"I have no least idea of trying to coerce you," she said; "but before you make so big a decision, you ought to consider a little more. There are sides of life that you haven't seen yet. I think you ought to give yourself a chance to know what you are refusing."

"If I don't know, I'll never miss it," said Mary hotly. "That's what mama keeps saying—I'll blame her later. It's all rot."

"If you are so sure of yourself, you need not be afraid to come," Marise argued. "Suppose you spend a month with me—"

Mary's head jerked up. "And let my job go!"

"Not if you don't want to. Certainly not. You can go down to your office every day just as usual, if you prefer."

"Would people have to know it?"

"Not necessarily."

Mary wavered, then burst out unhappily: "But what's the sense? I tell you, I've made my decision!"

"Don't you perhaps owe me a little something, Mary?"

The girl looked startled, and waited for an explanation.

"You were my own child, my very dear baby;" Marise still kept her fatally controlled voice, and she sat as erect as a lady making a call. "Since you disappeared, every moment of my life has been given up to finding you. I have—suffered a great deal, you know. Looking for you has been my whole life. I think perhaps you owe me—well, say a month. It is natural that I should want to make friends with you, isn't it?"

"I get you," Mary admitted heavily. "Only, mama is just all busted to bits, while you—" She paused, and Marise smiled a little.

"Perhaps I am busted, too," she said.

Mary flushed and frowned. "Oh, I know I talk like a mutt," she flared up. "I don't care if I do. I don't care about talking any different."

She got up, and Marise, rising, laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Don't fight me, Mary," she said, and the greater wisdom of nature, breaking through her control, put a tremor in her voice. "I don't want to change you. I only want to—come a little closer to my child." Then she put down

the tremor. "You were the dearest baby," she went on with smiling lightness, her arm just touching the girl's shoulders as they moved to the door. "Obstreperous, but so loving. You adored your Mardie. I'll show you the old dolly that you used to take to bed every night—don't you remember Doodoo at all? Of course, you were too little. I will tell you all about everything when you come."

The human girl in Mary must have been tempted, for she answered with gratuitous roughness: "I couldn't stand a month. I'd go crazy."

"For a week, then?"

They looked into each other's eyes, but Marise saw only unwillingness, and she kept her surface so smooth that Mary could have seen nothing at all. Neither dreamed that the other held back a very river of tears.

"Well, all right," said Mary. "But, you understand, I belong to mama."

"I quite understand," said Marise, and just touched Mary's cheek with her lips. "I will expect you to-morrow night, then? In time for dinner?"

"And we won't tell people," Mary insisted.
"Well, good night, Mrs. Jaffrey. It's a queer world, isn't it?"

"Yes, very queer," said Marise, and the door closed between them.

IV

EARLY the next morning Marise was at the door of the room that until very recently had been Mrs. Osborne's. It was a small room, but sunny and prettily furnished in old blue and pale gray. Freshly laundered curtains lay in a drawer, ready to go up, but, after looking at them, Marise wrote "curtains" on a pad she carried. The roll of silk and down on the foot of the bed was good enough for any casual guest, but not for the guest that was coming, and none of her embroidered linens was found to be sufficiently fair and fine for Mary's dressing-table. Marise had dreamed this day so often, the day she should prepare the room for her child, that the dream joy came flooding over hurts and difficulties and swept her down to the shops. Her gladness was not less solemn because it demanded this expression. Even the Three Kings bore gifts.

The clerks who waited on Marise that morning observed her curiously. She carried herself with an odd stillness; the very turns of her head

were slow and quiet, as though she feared to disturb some wonder, and her gaze would fix unseeingly for long minutes on the fabrics they displayed. Then, at a question, she would start and seem to open to them misty depths of elusive beauty in the broken smile of her apology. She was clearly moving on the heights of a mighty experience, and her passing left a faint trail of romance.

At noon she was back with a cabful of offerings. They were carried directly to the little room, which Hannah had just finished cleaning.

"Mary Healy is coming here for a few days," Marise explained when her porters had gone; "so I bought some things. Just bring the step-ladder, Hannah. I shan't want anything else of you."

Hannah knew, of course, that something was afoot, and maintained a hurt expression, generally designed to cover any situation. She had been dismally sure what was in store when she had seen a familiar card falling from yesterday's violets. Mrs. Jaffrey, who had slept all day with the violets in her arm, had waked up like a girl, and like a girl she had remained, deeply smiling and near tears and not hearing

anything that was said to her. But last night, refusing coolly and for a second time to speak to Mr. Le Baron on the telephone, she had upset that theory, and now here she was turning the guest room upside down for this Healy young woman, who no doubt was trading on Mrs. Jaffrey's well-known tenderness for any one bearing the name of Mary, and perhaps had a design to get herself adopted. Hannah did not know that a heavy ache in the breast may be jealousy. She would have explained it as righteous disapproval.

Marise put up the new curtains with touching difficulties and blunders. Hannah's matchless care of her all these years had left her as ignorant of domestic implements as a princess in a fairy tale. She hemmed the curtains at varying lengths, she hung them wrong side out; severely logical processes brought strange, inexplicable results; the scissors disappeared with a persistent malignance that seemed human; and still the brooding smile never left her eyes. Sometimes she forgot to go on, sitting on her step-ladder in a characteristic attitude, forearms resting along her knees, hands drooping palms up and pressed together, as though to

catch something falling from heaven. Hannah passed the door with increasing frequency, ready to give ungracious help if it should be asked, but Mrs. Jaffrey was never aware of her. At last Hannah could not bear it.

"If you'd let me get my hands on those curtains for five minutes, m'am, they'd be all right," she said severely.

Mrs. Jaffrey blinked at her like one awakening from happy dreams.

"Oh—aren't they all right?" She came down from the ladder to look at her handiwork, and Hannah took possession of it without further permission. The discovery that Marise had hemmed the tops with ninety thread at first brought a dim comfort, proving her own vital importance to that household. Then, as she took in the other preparations, her heart froze within her.

Mrs. Jaffrey had laid a strip of priceless Italian cutwork on the dressing-table, and was unwrapping an ivory toilet set, slightly but exquisitely carved. On the bed lay a pile of embroidered towels, fit for royalty. Cologne, bath salts, French soap, a reading lamp with a painted shade, new novels, a blue leather work-box

elaborately fitted out, emerged here and there from drifts of tissue-paper. If she had found her own child, Mrs. Jaffrey could not have made richer preparation. She had been near adopting girls once or twice before, in Hannah's opinion, but it had never looked as serious as this. Active measures were necessary.

"Excuse me, m'am, but I hope you don't think of leaving those towels for the young woman to use," she began with an air of reasonable concern. "Girls like that are as likely as not to use a towel to wipe their boots. They don't mean any harm; they are just ignorant of nice ways and fine things."

Mrs. Jaffrey's spirit had to come a long way back before she could take in what was being said. Then she smiled, deeply, disconcertingly.

"If Mary Healy wants to use the towels on her boots, she may," she said tranquilly.

Hannah, born to domineer, was always being obliged to back down and feel her way. It was very hard.

"You've known the young woman a long time, perhaps?" she threw out.

"Not so very. Well, yes, I have!" The secret was at Marise's lips. She longed to cry out,

"Why, Hannah, it is Mary! It is my baby! Can't you see that it is? Isn't it exactly the same darling little face grown up? And the same sturdy, independent little soul? Oh, Hannah, be glad with me, for the long search is over, I've found my child!" The words sang in her so loudly, it seemed as though Hannah must hear them. But Mary had expressed a desire that no one should know, and what Mary wanted was more important even than the rights of this faithful woman. Hannah was not likely to guess the truth, for she took the gloomy view of any situation as naturally as she breathed, and from the first she had been secretly convinced that Mary had met a horrible death. She had stood by during the long search, but sighingly, with pitying headshakes. And she had not known the little face so intimately that she would find it again in the grown girl. She should know very soon—sooner than any one except Hugh; but meanwhile Marise could make only an indirect appeal to her sympathies.

"I have a reason for being very grateful to Mary Healy," she said. "She has—done a good deal for me. We must make her happy here, Hannah. I want her to like it."

Hannah removed the ladder to the hall and gathered up the scattered papers in a silence that promised ill for Mary Healy's happiness. Marise had not seemed to notice, but she sighed after Hannah had gone. Then, in the joy of shaking out and hanging up a white corduroy dressing-gown, she forgot everything else. There had been a delicious tenderness in finding one of white corduroy—as though the little cloak had come back grown up. When the room was in order, and had been made sweet with roses and freesia, she could not believe in difficulties. Her dear baby was found, and was coming home to her.

She opened the door herself when Mary rang, and so saw her before the girl was aware. Perhaps Mary had just come from another hard scene, for there was a hurt sag in face and body and her lips still carried the shape of some hot protest. Then, seeing who it was, she straightened up to her rôle.

"Well, here I am," she said with a brisk imitation of her usual friendly manner.

"Here you are!" The joy would come out. "Oh, little Mary, here you are!" Marise folded her arms about her child, but, feeling her resist-

ance, let them fall again. "I must be wise," she was telling herself under her surface talk as they went up-stairs together. "Oh, I must be very careful!"

It was heartbreaking to have to be so careful! She wanted to draw Mary about the room, showing her the pretty new things and revealing to her, mutely but every moment, what this reunion meant; to tell her, little by little, the story of the lost years and to feel opening between them the exquisite intimacy that was their right. But Mary was shut against any allusion to the past or to the bond between them. She had come defended at every point, her gallant bearing stiffened to defiance, the old beaming good-will hardened to a hostile cheerfulness. She would not seem to notice the pretty room, and her attitude made it clear that she was not going to open her bag while there was any one present to look at her things, so Marise soon had to leave her.

"Don't dress for dinner unless you want to," she said at the door. It was the sort of thing one said to any casual guest, and she could not go like that. She turned back and opened a drawer, motioning Mary to look in.

Mary suspected some trap for her emotions, and came with exaggerated nonchalance. The battered old doll within held her eyes, but she made no movement to touch it.

"That was your beloved Doodoo," said Marise, smiling an appeal.

Mary turned away. "Mama bought me lots of dolls," she said. "Whole families of them. She's always given me everything I ever wanted."

Marise closed the drawer. "Oh, yes. She has been wonderful to you," she assented.

"You bet. And I mean to stick to her," said Mary with emphasis.

Marise went away without answering, looking more remote and fine-lady than she knew, but presently, when the sick ache of her whole being had died down, understanding brought comfort.

"Why, she is only being loyal, poor little soul," she thought it out. "Fiercely loyal. And she is afraid! That's it—she is afraid to yield one inch. Oh, she is fine, she's fine: it took force of character to stand me off like that. My little girl! Oh, but I must be careful!" Though she felt the fineness of Mary's loyalty, she had

no least intention of remaining shut out. The long search could not end like that.

And so they faced each other at dinner like any two polite acquaintances. Mary was perfectly ready to talk so long as the one subject was avoided, and the big world of the office gave her an inexhaustible theme. Mr. Engel's temper, which had every one but Mary terrified, and Mr. Weeks's jokes, which Mary returned in kind, revived some of the girl's usual glow; she could not long forget that it was fun to be Mary Healy! Marise, perhaps, did not hear it all, but she kept the amused intent air of a perfect listener, and made no forbidden allusion. It pleased her to see that Mary was not in the least in awe of Hannah, though the latter, by a cast-iron rigidity, was doing her humble best to make her disapproval felt. When she had finally left the room, Mary looked after her with an appraising eye.

"Old pie-face seems to have a permanent grouch," she observed, then went serenely on with her theme—the approaching marriage of Mr. Weeks's private secretary—without noticing how she had taken her mother's breath. Marise, accustomed to having all her appurtenances re-

spected, was weakly glad that no response was asked of her.

"She's twenty-six, which seems to me pretty old to get married," Mary was saying; "but then, my gracious, he's over thirty. I'm not in line for her place, of course—I'm too young; but I bet I could get it within two years if I wanted to. When I set out for anything, I'm pretty apt to get it. Mr. Weeks told me once that I was first cousin to a steam-roller." That made her laugh. "He's always calling me something new. Mrs. Jaffrey, I don't see what girls do who haven't a nice jolly office to go to every day. I'd die. Sunday always seems to me about fourteen hundred miles long."

If there was a defiant intention under the words, Marise was not going to recognize it. "Don't you get very tired?" she asked.

"Oh, yes. But I go to a show or something and I laugh it all away. Mama and I are great on shows. We never miss anything that's worth seeing. Mama's such fun at a real play. She gets so mad at the villain, she almost climbs over the footlights to give him a piece of her mind. One night she yelled right out—'You let that young woman be, you sneak!' Laugh—I

thought I'd die. We know a press agent—he's a very particular friend of mine, and he's always taking us to things. He's about the leading press agent on this coast. He has met two presidents of the United States—talked with them, you know. He says he's at home on any level, from the White House to the corner grocery. We see a great deal of him."

Mary was defying her again, displaying the richness of life in the Healy family, and Marise, casting about for some competing richness to offer, felt humbled and dismayed. The life she led seemed very dull by comparison.

"When I was a girl, I had good times out of tennis and skating and riding," she was beginning, but Mary cut her short.

"Nothing to it," Mary declared. "Mama and I go to the seashore on my vacation, swell places like Narragansett and Atlantic City, where we can watch the girls at all those things, and, believe me, it's some hard work. And what have they to show for it? They don't even get a whole man apiece to do it with. There's always fifteen girls and one measly little fellow to divide among them." Mary was generously ready to expand any subject to any depth. She

loved to hold forth. "I know girls, Mrs. Jaffrey, and I know perfectly well that when they go off doing things by themselves, it just means that they can't get hold of any fellows. Now you take me—there's bunches of men in the office, perfectly fine fellows, and though we don't have any nonsense in business hours, it's there all the time, and it's jolly. It's jolly if you just meet at the water cooler for half a second; it makes your head go up and your heels go down, puts some zip into things, do you see? I tell you, for girls, life without fellows is—well, it's like these denatured imitations of coffee. All right enough if you can't get the real thing. But, gee, I don't see how they stand it!"

Marise had never felt her child so hopelessly lost as in this moment, when they sat with only a few feet of mahogany between them. She shaded her face with her hand and tried in vain to find something she could offer. Love, a mother's love, was no rarity to this girl. Marise's dream had been of lifting, healing, helping—stooping to any depths to gather up a stray life, filling all its needs with love and shelter and ease. But Mary looked at her from a level, if not from a height, and coolly demand-

ed, "How can you match what I already have?" Studies, duties, companionship, would make a pallid program beside Mary's adventurous days.

"Do all the girls in the office feel about it as you do?" she asked presently.

Mary considered, looking very handsome in her young earnestness. "They're dubs, most of them," she decided. "They haven't got any ambition. They just want to keep their jobs till they can get married. And they're always complaining. They think they're put upon, or some one has been mean to them, or something. Not all, of course. Two of our girls are great. But girls in general don't put their teeth into their work, Mrs. Jaffrey. They just nibble."

Marise lifted her head with rather a wan smile. "You have thought about things a great deal, haven't you! When I was your age, I wasn't half as wise as you are. Life was all good times and feelings—happy feelings, usually. And lessons, of course—oh, lessons without number. I never had time to think—or any real experience to think about, I dare say."

"Well, mama thinks a lot, and she has always talked to me as she would to any one. We talk things out just like two sisters." Mary never

missed a chance to emphasize the bond, and Marise felt a surge of impatience. It left her shocked, ashamed. That was no way to feel on the night of Mary's return!

"We will have our coffee in the other room," she said, and rose to get away from the unworthy moment.

A deeply cushioned seat faced her couch corner by the fire, but Mary chose a stiff chair, uncomfortably carved, and sat bolt upright, as though to avoid any effect of permanence. Marise said nothing until Hannah had taken away the coffee cups; then she turned to her child.

"Now, Mary, I am going to tell you the whole story," she said.

Mary was in a mood to object to anything, but a new force in her mother's manner suggested that she had gone far enough for one night, so she only sat a little straighter on her hard chair. Marise took up the tale from her first meeting with Arnold Jaffrey, telling it with quiet candor, neither shielding Arnold nor softening the blunders of her own importunate youth. When at last she came to the terrible day, Mary had forgotten everything but this

intense drama of which her unknown self had been the heroine. She moved to the edge of her chair, then, quite unconsciously, to the rug at her mother's feet, and her lifted face brought back the little Mary so vividly that Marise had to clench her longing hands and pray for wisdom. She let herself bend a little nearer, leaning on her forearms, but she kept the appeal out of her voice by main strength. The tale went on almost automatically.

"You know the farm part of it," she concluded, when she had told of Arnold's death and of her agonized search through the wreckage for some trace of her child. "We can put together the whole story now, except for what happened at the Long Island ferry. We have to guess at that—but I think I can see it. When your father had telephoned the inn and found that it was closed, he must have stood there in the ferry house, debating, you and Mona beside him; and then an acquaintance passed and spoke to him. We know that. It would have made him very uneasy; some friend might come next who would ask questions, and he cared about appearances more than anything on earth. He probably grew impatient and ex-

cited, and Mona, of course, had been longing for an excuse to go out to the farm—she had been thinking of nothing else since she saw her sister's advertisement, three or four days before. The other servants had known that she was troubled, and once Hannah had found her crying. She could tell your father that it was a nice wholesome place, and he would have jumped at the chance to escape possible embarrassment, to get the whole situation off his hands. He was like that, a very nervous man.

"They didn't take a cab from the ferry—I suppose none happened to be there. Either he put them on a car and caught the boat himself, or he took them across the city and then came back. It was the crowded hour, every one streaming home, and so many with babies. No doubt he told Mona to meet him in town again in a couple of days. And he did not write down the address of the farm because he never needed to—he could remember even telephone numbers. He was a little proud of that. He must have gone down by himself to the duck club. That was Monday night, and on Wednesday morning he was dead. A special car and engine took me out to the wreck—that was the first journey I



She saw the framed photograph and rose to look at it

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made to find you, Mary. For years after it seemed as though I lived on trains, always going to see or find some child that might be you, trying not to hope, and then, on the journey back, trying not to despair. To this day I can't endure going on a train. The very smell of the cinders makes me feel faint. I don't give in to it—I go when I must. And perhaps it will be different now. Oh, do you realize what a miracle it is, finding you?"

The appeal leaped out in spite of her. Instantly a veil dropped, the eager spirit withdrew. Mary, casting her eyes about for some way of escape, saw the framed photograph by the chimney, and rose to look at it.

"Was that me?" she asked.

"Ah, my dear, that was you seven months before, and so poor; it looked like any child. I had never had a good picture of you. I was just going to try again when you went away. A really good likeness might have found you for me. In that case—let me see"—she smiled consideringly at the averted face—"I suppose you would now be at college. I don't believe you would have wanted to come out at eighteen, as I did. Girls are getting a better standard. Per-

haps you would be studying for some profession."

"And I'd be a lidy instead of a woyking goyl," observed Mary.

The note of mockery chilled Marise unbearably. She shrank into herself, and Mary wandered about the room, examining things without really seeing them. Presently she yawned with intention.

"If you don't mind, Mrs. Jaffrey, I guess I'll go to bed," she said. "You see, I have to be up early."

Marise went up with her. She knew in every fiber that the girl wished she would not, yet how could she help it? This was Mary's first night at home! She tried to make her presence casual and unobtrusive, but she had been an important person for so long that she really did not know how. And when she saw that, while her own room had been prepared for the night, nothing had been done in Mary's, she forgot her difficult humility and rang with emphasis for Hannah.

"Miss Healy is going to bed now, Hannah," she said, a faint surprise in her eyebrows. "Mary, come into my room while Hannah is getting yours ready."

Mary, swept along like that, had to come, but she registered her reluctance by taking her stand near the door and refusing to see anything. She would not even look at the long frame holding her own various baby pictures that stood on the chiffonier beside her. There was a dull flush in her face, a heavy droop of secret trouble just back of her defiant alertness. Poor child, working it all out by herself, with two loves struggling for possession of her, and the bitter lament of her adopted mother tearing at her good young heart! She was worth winning, this difficult daughter. Marise roused herself to pour out friendliness, to warm and draw the girl as she had drawn other girls for years past. She had known so well how to do it—the vivid interest, the friendly and natural manner, the glow of good will. It was so truly what she felt in general that she could reproduce it even when her heart was a little too tired to participate. She seated herself in a deep chair, silken knees crossed, and laid out plans like a fairy godmother.

"We must go to the theater some night soon," she said. "And I have cards to various things that you might like, private views and illustrated talks. And there is the automobile show.

Do you think you could learn to run a car, Mary? I mean to try it myself, this summer." The plan was born that moment, and a thrilled sense of new freedom came with it. "There are so many pleasant things to do! I have not had time to think about them for years and years. Why, Mary, it is going to be like a new lease of life, having you off my mind!" Her laugh begged an answer, but the young face was stonily unresponsive. Marise pushed on.

"I have a dear old summer home up on the sound that was my father's. We will run out there some spring Sunday, if you like. Usually I rent it, but this year I shall stay there." That plan, too, had just sprung into existence. "It has a splendid beach, if you care about swimming. I used to run down and jump in every morning before breakfast, when I was a girl." The memory brought back a salty breath of youth, but Mary was unmoved.

"I should think it would have been lonesome," she said. "I like a jolly crowd when I go in."

Marise smiled to show that she was not dashed. "We can have a jolly crowd here if you like," she offered. "The big room would be splendid to dance in. Or we can have a tea

party. Let me see—to-morrow is Saturday; haven't you friends you would like to ask in to tea Sunday afternoon? They would not have to know why you were staying with me—I have girls here so much. We could send them cards to-night. Should you like that, dear?"

Mary seemed to be holding herself physically tight shut. "I have all the company I want at home," she said, scarcely moving her lips.

Marise suddenly rose and took the upper hand. "Oh, come, Mary!" She spoke strongly. "You don't have to harden yourself against me because you are loyal to Mrs. Healy. Can't you be big enough to take us both in?"

The unexpectedness of the attack nearly broke through Mary's guard. A flood of distressed color betrayed a secret weakness, her lips trembled. Marise lifted her arms, all her starved motherhood in her shining eyes and her broken smile, and the girl wavered toward her.

"Miss Healy's room is ready, m'am." Hannah spoke from the doorway, irony in her prim voice; the very way she stood, addressing Marise and ignoring Mary, expressed an acid comment on young persons of inferior birth who pushed their way into the good graces of their

superiors. Marise was conscious only of the grievous interruption, but Mary stiffened into the street child, the girl who has fought her own way. With a hand on her hip and an upward thrust of the chin, she looked down and up Hannah's Victorian person until the latter retreated in flustered wrath. Then she gave a careless nod in the direction of Mrs. Jaffrey.

"Well—I guess I'll hit the hay," she said, and went off with something of a swagger.

Marise's arms had fallen limp at her sides. Forlorn tears gathered to her eyes.

"Oh, I must be wise, I must be patient," she breathed, wiping them away.

Mary had been told to ring for her breakfast when she wanted it, but the next morning Hannah reported that she had not done so, and had gone out very early without it. Marise knew that she must have run home to breakfast, and pictured the fiercely loving reunion with a heavy heart. "She'll fling herself down on me like a pup," Mrs. Healy had said; and Marise could not win so much as a willing touch of the young hand. The sense of being shut out desolated the whole day. She bought theater tickets for the next week, but there was no pleasure

in it, done like this—to keep Mary from being too painfully bored.

Mary's office closed at five on Saturday, but it was nearly seven when Marise let her in. She said nothing about where she had been, but her face was stormy, and her rôle of defiant cheerfulness was harder than ever to maintain. She escaped to her room as quickly as possible, and when she came to dinner, it was evident that she had been crying. Marise, confronting the tragic young presence, felt again the surge of impatience that had so shocked her the night before.

"It is Mary," she reminded herself. "It is my dear baby!" And so she forced the smile back to her eyes, the kindness to her voice.

"How was the office to-day?" she asked.

Mary would have risen from the dead to talk about the office, and she could not refuse the topic now. She began reluctantly, but the absorbing relations and experiences of that exciting world soon had her erect and glowing. Mr. Weeks had invented a new name for her. His private secretary, the one who was soon to be married, had blundered, and had been ignominiously sent home.

"Your head's too full of trousseau to be of any earthly use," he had vociferated. "For the love of heaven, go and buy lingerie. And send me the human gyroscope. Nineteen weddings couldn't make Mary Healy lose her balance."

"Of course, after that, I had to be Johnnie-on-the-spot if I died for it," Mary admitted, laughing. "Oh, it was a joke! I never worked so hard or so fast in my life. And the better I did, the more old Weeksie pushed me—just for wickedness. When he was through, he said, solemn as an owl, 'You have done very well, and I will give you a day off to-morrow.' Gee, he almost caught me! I remembered just in time. So I says, 'You're real kind, Mr. Weeks, but I'm pretty apt to have one on Sunday.' Laugh! I thought he'd blow up. 'Oh, go home, you gyroscope,' he says. It was funny."

Marise found response very difficult. Her child was magnificently equipped for self-protection, and yet the mother instinct cried out for the right to protect. She did not want her little girl to be at the mercy of unknown employers.

"Do you ever have any difficulties, Mary?" she asked with hesitation. "There must be all

kinds of men in a big office. Are any of them ever—impertinent?”

Mary's shoulders squared, her chest swelled. “Not more than once!” she observed.

“But when you first began, dear—didn't men sometimes make it hard?”

Mary had her philosophy on that subject and was glad to impart it. “Mrs. Jaffrey, I've seen a lot of girls and fellows, and heard a lot of tales, but this is the way I dope it out: a girl gets what she's looking for, and she gets what she's afraid of; but if she isn't afraid, and she's straight goods, she hasn't anything to worry about. Of course, loafers say things to you on the streets: ‘Come to the theater, girlie?’—you know, things like that. But all you have to do is act as if you hadn't heard. It doesn't even make me mad any more. I remember the first time a man said, ‘Two dollars!’ over my shoulder—oh, I wanted to clean out the town.”

“But what did he mean?” Marise asked, frowning.

Mary shot an astonished glance into her mother's face, then looked away. “Oh, I guess he was just being fresh,” she said, instinctively doing what every one tried to do for Marise—

to protect her, to keep away from her ugly things. Marise had gone down into the city's depths, but always with this invisible guard about her. Her much loved and sheltered youth seemed to have left some tittle to special privilege. "Anyway, I never have any trouble," Mary hurried on, "and the girls that are always talking about how they're followed and insulted—well, I think they kind of like the excitement. I know, there's a fearful homely girl in the office, and when one dark night she walked home and a fellow tried to join her—oh, she told it like a Horrible Experience, but she was just pleased to death. You needn't tell me! She's always walked home ever since. Oh, she's a nice girl," Mary added considerably. "She wouldn't do anything. But when a girl hasn't any fellows of her own, she can't help liking it when she gets some sign of life. It's natural."

Marise sighed, then laughed a little, looking at her child in humorous dismay. "You know too much, Mary!"

"Well, if you go down-town every day and keep your eye peeled, you're apt to;" Mary was gratified. "Gee, but it's interesting! Even when I marry, I'm going on with my work."

"There is so much one doesn't understand;" Marise was thinking back a long way. "I used to go down to my father's office now and then—it was a big law office, and of course there were girls at the typewriters. I was so sorry for them that I was half ashamed to have them see me—I thought my lot was so much happier than theirs. And when I tried to talk to them, I felt shy. I was afraid they would resent my good times and my good clothes."

Mary's chin had taken a slight lift. "Mrs. Engel comes into the office all dolled up, but we don't envy her," she said with emphasis. "Sitting around an apartment all day—making calls—airing the Pekinese—there's nothing to it. I'm sorry for her."

Marise saw that she had made a mistake, and let her reminiscences carry her on to a safer place.

"It used to be a tremendous journey to my father's office," she said. "We didn't have motors when I was a girl, and the carriage took hours. Probably I only went down when I wanted money, or some permission that had to be coaxed out of him; but I can see now how his face would light when I opened the door. He

always had time for me. Ah, he was a dear person, Mary! I wish you could have known him."

Mary had been moving restlessly. "Yes. Well, the reason Mr. Weeks was so excited was that Miss Bowen—that's the secretary—had mixed two letters, put them in the wrong envelopes. Can you imagine a girl—" The tale flowed on and on. Marise's attention wandered. She had been saving things to tell Mary for sixteen years, but she had to face a depressing suspicion that Mary was not especially fond of listening.

"Perhaps one doesn't listen at eighteen," she thought excusingly, and turned to the girls she knew best—Evelyn and Doris Thayer, for instance. But she had to put away the thought of them in some haste. Their lovely courtesy, their well-bred openness to anything that "Aunt Marise," as they called her, wanted to tell them, made too sharply visible the price that Mary had paid for her independence. And Mary was splendid; that was all her mother needed to remember. She rose from the table newly fortified for her task.

"Do you sing, Mary?" she asked, pausing at the piano. Mary did not, and was apparently glad of it. "See if you don't remember this," Marise persisted, and sang an old lullaby that had often closed the little Mary's eyes. As she sang, she could feel the growing weight of the child against her breast, and her voice, deep and sweet, plead with the closed young heart, begging to be taken in. Mary stood with bent head, turning over the books on the table. When Marise's hands dropped from the keys, she spoke roughly.

"No; I don't remember it at all. I haven't got much ear, anyway. I don't care for music." Then she lifted her head to listen, brightening with unmistakable relief. "Oh, there's the telephone—I guess it's for me. May I go?"

Marise nodded and she flew off. Presently she came back shining.

"My friend is down-stairs, Mrs. Jaffrey. He wants me to go out with him for a little while. Do you mind?"

No doubt it was natural. Marise forcibly put aside a bitterly hurt self. "Won't he come up and see you here?" she asked pleasantly.

"Oh, no." Mary was embarrassed. "I guess he'll take me to a show or something."

"Well, ask him to come up to get you, Mary." Then, as the girl hesitated, openly unwilling, Marise spoke with involuntary authority: "My dear, it is not fitting that you should meet him down-stairs!"

That was a fatal word to use to Mary, a fatal tone to take. She who was a little queen in her own world had not come there to be corrected and instructed! She flamed and stiffened, then turned without a word and marched back to the telephone. A moment later Marise heard her stalking up the stairs. Poor child—she had looked so like the baby Mary on the verge of an indignant roar! For all her contrition, Marise laughed silently into her hands. She had a vision of a darkened room full of wrathful sound, with doll, elephant, lamb and pillow flying over the wall of the crib, when Mary did not feel herself in need of a nap. What a vigorous mite she had been, so loving and so full of fight! Marise, following her through days and scenes that she had not dared remember for sixteen years, forgot to wonder why Mary's "friend" was so long in mounting and she in

coming down. At last she lifted her head with a start. The apartment was uncannily still. Moving very quietly, Marise went up-stairs.

The door of Mary's room was open and she sat just within on a straight chair, her hands folded together, her eyes fixed on the wall. Grim patient endurance of an interminable ordeal was expressed in every line. "I suppose I can stick it out!" she seemed to be saying. The new novels had not been touched nor the work-box opened. Mary might unpack her bag, but she had steadfastly refused to unpack her spirit.

Marise stole down again, unheard, her lips set in a disciplinary line. Mrs. Healy's devotion had not been the unmitigated blessing that it had seemed! The girl was outrageously spoiled. Marise had for years been preparing her mind for dire failings in her recovered child, but this trial found her patience all unready. It was ridiculous for a girl to be so self-important! She could martyrize herself up there as long as she pleased; Marise did not intend to let her know that her pose had been witnessed. And so, on the second evening of Mary's return, mother and child sat separated, both in a high state of righteous protest.

V

IT is hard to maintain an attitude of proud ennui with no one to see it. Mary, sitting haughtily in her room while her mother sat quite as haughtily below, had at last yielded to a novel in an alluring paper wrapper when a step in the hall sent the book coasting under the valance of the bed. She had only just time to get back her weary droop, chin sunk, hands lying heavily on her knees.

"Might I come in to prepare the room for the night, miss?" Hannah spoke over Mary's head with her most self-respecting expression.

Mary had started at the voice. Then a clearing relief dawned in her eyes; her thumbs dropped into her belt and her spirit visibly welcomed the chance for a little healthy exercise.

"Do you open my bed to show me the way in?" she asked, tilting back against the wall. "Because, you know, it isn't necessary. Even in the woyking clarses we get in at the top."

Hannah, unhampered by Marise's presence, was no mean fighter herself. "The madam's

orders," she said smoothly, folding the embroidered counterpane. "But if I am disturbing you, miss, I am sure the madam would be happy to have you sit in her room, or in the study if you are not wanted in the drawing-room."

A note of laughter acknowledged the thrust. "Go to it, Queen Victoria," Mary congratulated her. "I didn't know you had it in you. I begin to sort of like you."

"Indeed, miss?" said Hannah.

"Oh, you'll like me too, in time," Mary assured her. "I'm an acquired taste, like hot dog, but once you get it—you'll hate to see me go."

Hannah's face darkened. "I think Mrs. Jaffrey said you were to be here a few days?" she observed. "Or was it a week?"

"Oh, I'm going, all right. You needn't worry," Mary drawled. "Tell me, is it always as lively as this in the evenings? I'm most dead of excitement."

That infuriated Hannah. "The madam is in society and is invited to all the best houses," she explained sharply. "When she stays at home in the evening, it is from choice. No doubt you are accustomed to phonographs and things of that nature."

"I sure am," said Mary, and yawned aloud. "How long have you held down this job?" she added.

"I have been in Mrs. Jaffrey's employ for seventeen years." Hannah, busy with the window-shades, did not see the girl's start.

"Then you were here before the—kidnapping, or whatever you call it?" Mary had brought down her chair legs and was staring with an intentness that Hannah considered low. Hannah had always defended the family tragedy from the excited enjoyment of the vulgar.

"I was, miss," she said coldly.

"And you knew the kid herself?"

"Certainly I knew Miss Mary."

"Gee!" It was a breath of wonder and despair at the amazingness of life. Mary struggled between caution and a surge of questions. "What sort of a youngster—?"

"Everything that a lady's child should be, beautiful and aristocratic." Hannah paused at the closet door. "The madam is kind to girls of every description, even the most common and loud, but she will never put any girl in Miss Mary's place," she explained with inescapable intention.

Mary had lost her fighting supremacy. The involuntary removal of her thumbs from her belt seemed to have left her vulnerable.

"Oh, won't she—pie-face!" she muttered.

"No, miss. Common ways and common language, they do not belong in the house of Mrs. Jaffrey. I have only pity for the ignorant. They know no better. They can't be expected to understand that a fine lady would be shocked by their ways." It was wonderful how Hannah's quiet hands, laying Mary's nightgown across the bed, could express her opinion of the garment. "Is there anything else I can do for you, miss?"

Mary's advantage was hopelessly gone. "You can let my things alone!" she burst out.

"I quite understand," said Hannah, and replaced in the closet a battered old pair of crocheted slippers that she had been about to set out. "Good night, miss. Breakfast will be served in the dining-room at nine o'clock—the madam's orders."

Mary glowered at her, but let her go unanswered. A new trouble had fallen on her burdened young soul. Her mouth still defied the world, but in her eyes lay a sick question. At

last, hesitating, pulled forward and drawn back, she set out very slowly toward the stairs.

In the upper hall there was an arched opening, like an unglazed window, hung with curtains of pale yellow silk. One of these curtains had been brushed back, and, pausing there, Mary found herself looking down into the drawing-room over the railing of a little balcony that was fastened like a bird's nest half-way up the wall. Across the room, between the fire and a shaded lamp, sat her mother. A book lay under one hand, but her head had dropped back and her eyes were fixed before her. She looked very fine in her slender grace, very sheltered and cared for, but also she looked sweet and sad—and not at all as if she were harboring unkind terms, such as “common” and “loud.” One's own mother—it was an upheaving thought.

If Marise could only have looked up! She would have seen her child wistful, humbled for the moment by an awful self-doubt, groping for help in the blind struggle between old and new feelings. She would simply have had to lift her arms. But the chance went by unknown, and when Marise, relenting, came to Mary's door to say good night, it was locked and the light was out.

Mary was herself again in the morning; perhaps a little more herself than was quite necessary. She came into the breakfast room with a generally squared look that was very nearly a swagger. Her mother put aside the morning paper and answered her high-handed greeting with a disconcerting smile. Marise had been impatient last night, but the miracle was too near, too amazing, to be lost sight of behind lesser feelings. Good or naughty, loving or defiant, Mary was her child, incredibly restored to her. Nothing else mattered. Beloved little Mary! Shining with tenderness, yet vowed to wisdom, Marise took her child's hand as she would have passed.

"Well?" she asked.

Mary had slept little and her nerves were on edge. "Well, what?" she returned, trying to make her roughness sound humorous, but not succeeding very well.

Marise let the hand escape. "How about church?" she asked pleasantly, ignoring the snub.

"We go sometimes;" Mary spoke with condescension. "We don't have to go, like Catholics. Mama's mother was a Catholic, but her father wasn't, and it made such an everlasting

row and trouble that mama didn't grow up much of anything. But she calls on the saints when she gets excited. I laugh at her."

Hannah was not in the room, and Marise ventured an allusion. "If she and her sister had been Catholics, I might have found you years ago; for the priests would have known Mona Molloy's story as well as Mrs. Healy's. They keep close to their people."

Mary had her opinion of the Catholic Church, and expressed it with a definiteness and thoroughness that disposed of that venerable institution, at least as a topic. The facts she already possessed satisfied her, and she was not interested in speculative considerations. When she had successfully produced silence, she leaned back with an air of waiting for another subject, that she might decapitate it. She was beginning to enjoy herself, but her mother looked tired and remote.

"Girls are like that—I dare say I was," Marise was telling herself when there was a ring at the door-bell, a light-footed rush from the hall, and suddenly the room seemed to be full of girls, and flowers, and packages, and laughing cries of:

"Happy birthday! Happy birthday, Aunt Marise!"

"Why, it is? My birthday?" Marise opened her arms wide to the embraces. "You dears—and I had forgotten all about it!" Their joy in surprising her, their worshipful affection, were exquisitely comforting at that discouraged moment. To the children of her old friends, Marise was a romantic figure, and they never forgot that she had no daughter to keep her anniversaries. They settled down into four girls, two on the arms of her chair and two on the arms of the chairs adjoining, so that Marise looked between them to her daughter, holding her place opposite in determined aloofness. Mary evidently thought it a silly fuss, but perhaps, underneath, she felt a little left out, and Marise's voice was quick with tenderness.

"Girls, I want you all to know Mary Healy. Mary, this is Doris Thayer and this is Evelyn Thayer, and this Cornelia Kent, and that little red-headed imp is Alice Martindale."

They sprang up, laughing, to shake Mary's hand, charmingly cordial, and blankly uninterested. She was accepted without question as one of the numberless protégées, and they set-

tled down again about Aunt Marise like a little flock of bright birds, eager for the opening of their presents. They were delightfully pretty and well mannered, trained and tended—products of a long expensive process, with voices that had been shaped by other languages from the time they knew their mother tongue; the contrast was cruel, and Marise ached for her baby. Mary was handsomer than any of them, she was nicely dressed in her fresh blouse and serge skirt, and yet the first glance would put her and them into widely different worlds. The poor darling must feel herself at a disadvantage.

If only it had been permitted to tell the truth! The girls would have been so madly excited, so glad and welcoming—Mary would have held the center to her heart's content. Marise had a rash thought of telling in spite of the prohibition, but Mary's brow was lowering, and she did not dare. The terrible young pride might resent the very fuss over her, since it came only with the knowledge of who she was.

The girls had many things to impart—school adventures, news about saddle horses and southern trips. It sounded very young and gay.

The "red-headed imp," seventeen and prettiest of them all, announced that "mother had an earl for dinner last night." She had seen him over the banisters.

"Oh, we had to dine up-stairs, too," Doris Thayer broke in. "The Boundaries Commission came to dinner. Father wanted us to hear the talk, but, as mother said, two of the commissioners would have to take us out, and that would be too hard on them."

Mary had forgotten to pretend that she was not interested. She was staring at Doris so amazedly that Marise drew out the explanation.

"Why too hard on them, Doris?"

"Oh, Aunt Marise, a girl of eighteen can't interest men like that! I should have been paralyzed with fright."

Candid modesty had no appeal for Mary Healy. She drooped back in bored disgust, and Marise hastened to another topic.

"Doris, Evelyn, whom do you think you are going to have for a neighbor next summer?"

"Oh, Aunt Marise! Really? Are you coming back?" They fell upon her with cries of joy. They "adored it," they were "crazy about it." She was to swim with them, to ride their horses,

to come to their beach teas. Marise laughed across the clamor at Mary.

"I was telling you about my father's old place on the sound, Mary. My land adjoins the Thayers'—well, about as a bird's nest adjoins an oak tree! But we are old neighbors, and they are dears about coming through the hedge when I am there."

Evelyn lifted her hand and kissed it. "It's such fun being with you—you listen so adorably," she explained. "Mother says that after we have visited you, it takes her two days to get us snubbed back into our places. Oh, Aunt Marise, won't you ask her to let me have an Annette Kellermann this summer? She makes me swim in a *skirt*."

"But it is because Evelyn is fat in the wrong places," Doris interposed with sisterly candor. "If she'd train down, mother wouldn't care about the skirt."

"Aunt Marise, won't you come to the Vacation Camp this summer?" Cornelia Kent pleaded. "You know about it, don't you? It's for poor girls, and a lot of us are going up for two weeks at a time, like scout masters. We'll teach them to swim and paddle and dance and

all that. Little clerks and typewriters, you know, that have never—" Though no one had seemed to move, there was evidence that Cornelia had been kicked under the table, for she caught her breath and stumbled. Marise came to the rescue.

"It sounds splendid," she said tranquilly. "Have you heard of it, Mary?"

"Oh, yes;" Mary's indifference was superb. "Some of the 'little clerks and typewriters' in our office have been talking about it. It's a very kind charity, I dare say—if you happen to need charity."

Cornelia flushed crimson, looking so distressed that Marise could have shaken her daughter. A squeal of discovery from Alice Martindale changed the subject, bringing the girls about the Sunday supplement that she had picked up. It showed the portraits of a certain "Aileen" and the man she was about to marry, and brought out a torrent of information. The marriage was evidently looked on as a glorious adventure.

"They've taken a little tiny apartment, only seven rooms, and she's going to have just one servant," Alice announced. "Don't you think it

will be a perfect lark? I went in the other day, and the maid was teaching her how to make a bed. Aileen was so funny and serious about it. I thought she made an awful mess of it, myself. I bet I could do it better."

"Bet you couldn't," said Doris.

"It may be romantic to marry on two thousand a year," Cornelia said decisively. "But wait till she always has to go in other people's cars, and see other girls manage so that she never has to pay when they do things together, and borrow a maid from her mother's when she wants to ask any one to dinner—I don't believe it will feel much like a lark. I think she's crazy."

"She's crazy about him," said Evelyn, rising. "Aunt Marise, the car had to go back, and Mademoiselle was to come and get us, but she ought to have been here before this. We are going to walk back across the park."

There was a general looking at wrist watches and starting up.

"With four of us, I don't see why we couldn't walk over alone," Doris began, but Evelyn cut her short.

"You know perfectly well, Doris, that mother wouldn't let us."

"Well, I am going to call her up and ask her," declared Doris, but before she had reached the telephone, Mademoiselle was admitted, to a general burst of French chatter.

They dropped back into English to say good-bye to Mary Healy, but the fervent cordiality of that courtesy won no response. Mary's expression was that of one who is not to be lightly taken in. When the little babel had died away, Marise tried in vain to win her child from the defensiveness that squared her shoulders and the suspicion that clouded her eyes. To be suspicious and on guard was only the normal result of the poor girl's experience, and Marise would have passed over the visit without comment, pitifully aware how young vanity can ache. But Mary had something to say on the subject. It grew visibly behind her darkened brow until it could no longer be kept in.

"Mrs. Jaffrey, those girls were my age, or nearly."

Marise had seated herself at her desk, the ornamental desk in the big room where she

wrote ornamental things like notes; but she laid down her pen and leaned back.

"Yes, Mary."

"Would I have been brought up like that?"

Marise considered. "Not quite. You would have gone to the same school, I suppose, and had the same friends; but we were not millionaires and I should have wanted you to know more about practical things. The Thayers were not so rich once—Mona Molloy left them to come to me because she had two babies to take care of. But of course the Martindales and the Kents were always—"

That was not what Mary meant. "I'm asking, would I be treated the same way?" The very idea made her redden. "Sent up-stairs when there was company—snubbed back to the tune of children-must-be-seen-and-not-heard, and me grown up—asking, 'May I?' and 'Must I?' and not take a walk by broad daylight without a monkey-face Frenchwoman—"

"Mary!"

"I have to say things the way I see them! I wasn't brought up to put on manners I didn't mean and kiss people's hands for being good enough to listen to me, and to have to have

private lessons before I could make a bed. I'm not a lady, thank goodness!—I'm a working girl; but I do what I please, and I'm anybody's equal. But I suppose you'd rather I was like them."

Mary was "spoiling" for a fight, an honest exchange of loud words and rough recrimination, to avenge the uncomprehended hurts of the past hour. Her brave philosophy about ladies and working girls had collapsed at this first serious test, leaving only its phrase on her lips; she was passionately as good as any one. A genuine "row" would have brought her out relieved and sweetened, made good again. But Marise could only retreat into cool fastnesses far above the reach of angry missiles.

"I should be glad if you had their simplicity and modesty, Mary," she said, after a grave weighing of the words.

"Modesty nothing! They pretend modesty, but don't they think they're it!" Mary flung back. "And all the time they haven't got anything that I haven't got. You get just as good an education in the grammar and the high as you do in their fancy kind of school. A poor child can have the same advantages as the rich-

est in the land—I can go to the theater and concerts and the Museum just as much as they can. Everything is open to everybody nowadays. I haven't got French manners and I don't want them. I'm perfectly satisfied to be the way I am." She turned tempestuously to the door, but paused there to hurl a final shot. "And I've seen girls in those Annette Kellermanns, and mama and I, we don't think they're decent!" Then she was gone, with a bang of her door to cut the possibility of further communication.

Marise wrote no letters. Hannah, coming in half an hour later with a fresh birthday offering, found her sitting as Mary had left her, her head drooped forward and the pen lying under her limp fingers. What Mary had missed had never been so brutally plain as since this loud assertion that she had missed nothing. Her mother lifted sad eyes.

"A girl has so much to learn, Hannah," she said. "And if she has not been taught a little of it every day, how can she ever catch up?"

Hannah's face showed a grim satisfaction. "She can't, m'am! Let her grow up in common ways, and common she'll be to the end."

She would have expanded her timely warning, but Mrs. Jaffrey abruptly changed the subject.

More birthday flowers came, and friends ran in or telephoned. How dear and good they were! After sixteen years, her world was still saying, "I'm sorry!" Mary did not reappear until Hannah knocked on her door to announce luncheon; then she came out in hat and coat.


"I guess I'll go up and lunch with mama." She had planted herself at the dining-room door with an air of giving Marise a fair chance to fight that out if she cared to. Her mother seemed to be looking at her from a long way off. She said nothing, and after a due pause, Mary tightened the chip on her shoulder and went.

The problem was growing too difficult to be met alone. Marise came to that decision with a relieved rush of the spirit, a sense of turning home after heavy journeying. She had not admitted before how she longed to tell Hugh. He could help her. Impatient and trying though he often was, he had a fundamental wisdom for serious crises. And even if he could not make it much easier, telling him would be such a comfort. His gladness for her would make

any feeling on his own account impossible. Dear Hugh! The sense of his devotion encompassed her all the afternoon as she waited for the tea hour to bring him. Hugh never forgot her birthday. That he had not sent a morning offering could mean only that he was coming himself in the afternoon.

When the afternoon did not bring him, Marise decided that he must have gone out of town, and waited anxiously for the evening. The momentary relief was gone. Between listening for Hugh and watching for Mary, she passed strained and miserable hours. The old, "I must not!" of her long patience had lost its efficacy, and she was weary of self-discipline. She wanted Hugh, and she wanted her baby, and no one came!

Mary did not reappear until after nine, and her entrance betrayed a guilty conscience. She tried to make it nonchalant, with a casual apology for not having realized the hour, but her eyes begged pardon in spite of her, and her pale harassed young face revealed that it had not been altogether a happy time. Marise suddenly began all over again with her, wiping out the difficult day with a welcoming smile.



"Come in and sit down a few minutes, Mary, if you are not too tired," she said, so pleasantly that Mary, braced for trouble, was left with no attitude ready. She came slowly to the couch and for the first time sat down beside her mother. Marise was as careful not to alarm her as a lover might have been. She showed her some new books, and Mary, though she looked at them with unseeing eyes, was gentle and grateful. Presently Marise tried a bolder advance. Taking out a drawer from the table, she laid it on a chair before them.


"Do you want to see your forebears and relatives?" she asked.

The drawer was full of old photographs, done in the days when a cabinet likeness of one's self was a suitable, even a necessary, holiday gift. They showed buckram sleeves, and bustles, and even chignons with a drooping curl and a black velvet neck band. Among them were photographs taken from dignified family portraits, and daguerreotypes of meek-haired little girls with bare shoulders, and of rosy, beautiful young men in black stocks. It was a good solid race to have sprung from, and, telling of family traits and peculiarities, Marise had her first

happy hour with her child. Mary could listen, after all. She laughed aloud over Great Uncle Ralph, who washed his priceless china with his own hands after a banquet, while three sleepy footmen stood about with dish towels; and Cousin Lucy, who was so afraid of fire that she slept with her valuables ranged round her in portable packages. There was one picture of a very young and lovely face, on which nothing had yet been written, looking happily out of a wedding veil, and then the same face only a year older, yet already remolded by difficult experience, pressed against the fuzzy head of a new baby.

"There you are," said Marise, caressing the baby with a light finger. "You behaved very badly when that was taken, Mary. In fact, you always did misbehave at the photographer's. You seemed to think that the camera took a personal liberty."

Mary had a downcast smile for that. "I do still," she admitted. "My pictures always look like I wanted to bite nails." She sighed. "I guess I'm not a very nice person, Mrs. Jaffrey. I've been ashamed all day of the way I spoke to you. I want to ask your pardon."



The honorable amend was so unexpected that Marise's eyes filled.

"I understand, dear! It is a hard situation—hard on all of us. We can only—do our best."

She offered her hand, and Mary shook it, then abruptly rose and marched off to bed. Marise kissed the baby in the picture and put it away, deeply comforted.

Morning brought no belated greeting from Hugh. It is difficult to ask even the closest friend why he has forgotten one's birthday, but by mid-afternoon Marise had imagined Hugh into a serious illness, and she called up his office. She was promptly put into communication with his own voice—but not the voice to which Marise was accustomed.

"Hugh, it is Marise," she insisted.

"Yes. How do you do?" was the cool answer.

Undoubtedly there was a client close at hand, hampering his speech. Marise hurried on.

"Hugh—I won't keep you a moment—but I want so much to see you. I have something to tell you."

"I'm sorry, but I am going out to-night. I have a dinner." He did not sound in the least sorry. It must be a very important client.

"Yes; and we are going to the theater. But I thought, if you had any time this afternoon—Hugh, I know there is some one there and I am interrupting you frightfully—"

"There is no one here. I am quite alone," said Hugh stiffly.

Marise was bewilderedly still for a moment, trying to understand. She was totally unaware how in the intense preoccupation of the week before she had seemingly snubbed Hugh, refusing to speak to him, ignoring his apology and his offering. All she realized was that the solid earth under her feet was reeling.

"You couldn't come up—for a few moments—this afternoon?" she finally asked with a troubled hesitation that would usually have brought him on the instant.

"I'm sorry," he repeated. "I am up to my neck in work to-day. I don't think I can manage it." There was another stricken silence, but he offered no help.

"Well—good-by," said Marise faintly.

It was a last chance, but he let it go with cruel indifference.

"Good-by," he said, and hung up with the word.

"Hughie!" stammered Marise. This was far worse than the Franzen Quartette. All the rest of the day she was explaining it to herself and trying to accept the bitter truth. Hugh was growing tired of giving so much and getting back so little. A man considered a woman's summons an honor only when he was in love with her; when he had got over that, of course it was merely a bore. Hugh had given her more than any woman ought to expect, and he had every right to withdraw. No doubt he had found a woman who dared give back what he gave, and in the light of her generosity he saw at last how meager Marise's return had been. He was done with her. He did not even want to hear about Mary.

Mary was spared allusions that night, and there were no subtle attacks on her feelings. They dined almost in silence, and were in the cab on the way to the theater before Marise could rouse herself to the present moment. Then, turning her head to look at the young presence beside her, she was ashamed.

"My own daughter is sitting here with me, and I am thinking of some one else," she reproached herself.

Mary's eyes were fixed on the rushing traffic and the streaming lights of Broadway. She had seen them often enough, but not from the angle of a taxicab window, and surely she must be thinking about the possible change in her lot, feeling a little the temptation of what to her would be wealth. Marise did not care how mixed the motives might be that brought her child to her. Mary had a big, warm, fighting heart, and time would show her mother the way in. She intended to offer every possible temptation, and not all for her own sake. Her child had a right to that station in life into which she had been born, she had a right to the great privilege of shelter and ease. Marise could daily leave her shelter to brave the dirt and sights and smell of the open world, but the shrinking that she controlled never grew less, and her spirit always flew home like a released arrow. The little allures of wealth were only the bait to catch this wary daughter; what she wanted to give her was beauty and grace in her private life. These things were so supremely precious to Marise that she could not question their general value. When they were not wanted, it was because they were not known.

The bait did not seem to be very effectual. Private cars, carrying women in brilliant evening clothes to the opera, were halted close beside them, offering little shadowy views of high life, but Mary looked them over with an undazzled scrutiny.

"Mama and I went to the opera once," she announced. "We didn't see anything in it. Gee, but we were bored! We could look down on the ladies in the boxes, and they were just as bored as we were. There was a sort of dark scene outside a church, and a man and a woman, they went on and on and on till I thought I'd die. Lawsy! Call that a good time! At last I says to mama, 'Do you know why I like the top gallery better than the finest seat down there in the middle of the orchestra?' She bit, all right. 'Because you're a sensible girl, content with what you have,' she says. 'Stung! Because we can get out easier,' I says. She laughed out loud, and the next time it let up, we skipped. Never again." The very memory could make Mary sigh with weariness. "People just go because it's swell. You needn't tell me they enjoy it," she concluded.

Marise had found yearly rest and renewal in

the Wagnerian surges and the Puccinian rivulets, but it scarcely seemed worth while to say so. Mary's decisions had an appalling finality, and besides they were stopping at the theater. She let it go, then decided that both her silence and her irritation were weakness, and went back to take it up.

"Mary, you are a dogmatic young person," she said with determined good humor. "I love opera, myself, and get a great deal out of it. You don't know what you are talking about."

That was evidently the way to argue with Mary. Her broad smile was disarming.

"Well, maybe I don't," she said. "But I know what it did to mama and I. We went and had fried oysters and a horse's neck, to get over it."

She jumped down from the cab and turned to put a hand under her mother's arm. Marise, sure-footed as a girl herself, stepped down uncertainly, that she might lean on the young strength. Things were undeniably better between them to-day. That hour over the family photographs seemed to have taken out some of the bitterness.

It was her first public appearance with her

child, and Marise, nodding to friends in the lobby and from the aisle, felt the thrill of the situation. If they could know! Their welcome and excitement must sweep Mary into the place that awaited her; and even Hugh would come back, at least temporarily, when he heard the news. Marise conceived a punishing desire that he should hear it from some one else. Had she dared, she would have gone up to friends then and there: "This is my daughter Mary. Yes, we have found her!" She could not do it without Mary's consent, but the idea of demanding consent, of throwing off this patience and wisdom and taking the upper hand, tempted her sorely. And fate seemed to be indicating that course, for, when they were settled in their seats, she found an elderly second cousin on the other side of Mary. Cousin Sherman had been very good to her always, and it would be well to tell him first. As she leaned across Mary, a sense of coming action shortened her breath and turned her blue eyes black.

"Marise, you are a wonder;" he kept her hand a moment to pat it. He was a very handsome old man, white haired and rosy, with a

delicately forceful beak above a chin that could still go clean shaven. His eyes had a subdued twinkle for ladies, as though he knew a thing or two about them, and no posturing on their part could lead him astray, but for Marise they always softened. "A wonder," he repeated. "In my day, people changed every few years, grew a little fatter or a little redder or browner or something; but I can't see that you ever change a line. I don't see how your women friends stand it!"

Marise answered with deliberate purpose. "Perhaps, when one's mind is in suspense, one's body stays in suspense, too. You see, Cousin Sherman, all these years I have been holding back—waiting. Perhaps I shall be like the mummies, that look perfectly preserved until they get a breath of air—and then crumble into dust."

"Then God keep the air away from you, my dear!"

"Oh, no. I will take my chance." Marise smiled deeply, meaningly. "I want you to meet Mary Healy."

He shook Mary's hand, looking at her with

arrested attention. The orchestra was playing for the rising of the curtain, and the air seemed to throb with suspense. If he should guess—if he would only guess and take the issue out of their hands!

"Miss Healy has a look of your Aunt Ellen," he said. "Have you noticed it, Marise? You needn't mind, Miss Healy—she was a very handsome woman. I dare say it is a strain of the same blood, if your name tells the truth."

For the first time Mary admitted—very faintly and guardedly—the romance of the situation. A furtive, reluctant half-smile in the direction of her mother acknowledged the joke of their secret.

"Miss Healy has Irish blood, just as I have," said Marise.

"We are all better for a little of it." Then the curtain rose, and he turned to the stage, changing to another pair of eye-glasses. "Ah, now we're going to have a good time," he said confidentially to the girl.

Cousin Sherman might see through the ways of ladies, but he could not be placed near one without trying to make her like him. He gave

Mary a very good time, sharing his amusement with her, whispering an occasional comment that brought out her warm little gurgle of a laugh. She evidently liked him enormously. Between his attention and the joy of the play, she had forgotten her troubles. Her face as the curtain fell was beaming.

"Shall I venture it? Shall I simply announce to her that I am going to tell?" Marise hung over the decision, then made a bold advance. "Mary!" The girl turned. "Suppose we tell Cousin Sherman! He would be so— My dear, what is it?"

Mary attempted no answer. Her glance had been drawn past her mother to the extreme end of the balcony overhead, and had fixed there, as though she saw something too poignantly sad for human bearing. The color had left her face and her body had grown rigid with shock. Marise lifted her theater glasses and behind their shelter stole a glance overhead. Isolated in the two end seats were a young man and a very large, middle-aged woman.

They might not have been together, for they were not speaking. The young man sat with dropped head, so that only a bush of dark hair

was visible, but the woman had folded her powerful arms across her chest and was looking down over them at Mary Healy. She might have been a monumental figure of Grief, stern grief that breaks but does not bend. If she saw that the girl had looked up, she gave no sign.

Marise had not for years felt such a surge of anger. In shutting away emotion as much as possible, she had nearly eliminated wrath, but now it came back with overwhelming force, as though it, too, had merely been held in suspense. Hot words surged through her like a physical torrent. She could have stood up there and cried out on Mrs. Healy for her cruelty and selfishness. The woman did not even play fair—sitting over them like the ghost at the banquet, working on the girl's loyal heart and spoiling the one happy, care-free hour she had had! It was abominable, it was vulgar! Marise had no worse word than that. In the brief intermission she could not recover the power of quiet speech, and Mary sat frozen beside her, sunk guiltily down, making no effort. Cousin Sherman's attention had been claimed by a friend just behind.

The second act dragged past. The house

laughed and applauded, but there were certainly three people, perhaps four, who saw nothing of it. In the dimness Marise stole several glances at the young man in the balcony, wretchedly facing a new complication, but if he were with Mrs. Healy, there was nothing to show it. They did not speak.

At the next curtain, Cousin Sherman rose.

"Wait till you are old, Miss Healy," he warned her. "Then you will have to mind your bedtime, just as you did when you were little. That is why they call it second childhood. Good night, Marise. Find out how this girl got your Aunt Ellen's brow and eyes."

He did not suspect, of course, and this was not the time to tell. When he had gone, Marise kept up a show of conversation for Mrs. Healy's benefit, but neither she nor the girl sitting so reluctantly beside her knew what she said. In the middle of the last act, she felt a relaxing of the tension, and knew before she glanced up that Mrs. Healy had gone. The young man's place also was empty.

VI

THEY left the theater heavily and in silence.

The thrill was gone from their secret, and Marise hurried her child through the crowd, nervous lest Mrs. Healy might be waiting outside to cast her grim shadow on their departure. Mary, too, was stealing quick glances in every direction, but whether in dread or desire, her mother could not tell. Marise, having a hand on her arm, felt the leap of the girl's nerves when a voice spoke her name.

"Well, Miss Mary!" A swarthy, chubby young man with the hearty manner of a leading citizen and a generally oiled appearance was shaking Mary's hand in benevolent greeting. "Well, well! Having a party? Splendid! First rate! How's mama? And where is the lucky fellow that brought you?"

If Mary would rise from the dead to talk about the office, it was also evident that no mortal trouble could hold her down in the presence of enthusiastic male attentions. She came up smiling so joyously that the young man in the

balcony seemed to fade from the situation. He must have been merely an unrelated accident.

"Mrs. Jaffrey, I want to make you acquainted with Mr. Peavy, Mr. Al Peavy," she said with importance. "I told you about him."

"Now—now—now—what did she tell you, Mrs. Jaffrey?" Mr. Peavy was giving Marise's hand the same prolonged treatment. All the lines of his face were horizontal, and he beamed like a moist brown sun. "No fair. I want to know. If she said I was one of nineteen suitors for her hand—and about third from the bottom—she'd come pretty near the truth."

Marise wanted desperately to be friendly, to hide the appalled drop of her spirit before this new test, but she could not think of anything to say. Mary, however, had no such difficulty.

"I told her you were a press agent, but not a very successful one, of course," she threw off.

He appealed to Mrs. Jaffrey. "Isn't she the worst? Isn't she a young terror, though? Mrs. Jaffrey, it has been my fortune to know all sorts and conditions of men and women. I've talked with presidents, I'm pals with a Chinaman who keeps an opium den, I taught one season in a district school and led the choir—I've sampled

human nature pretty much in every direction; and I never met any one who could get the best of me like Miss Mary Healy. I'm a child in her hands."

"If you were a child in my hands," Mary declared, "you'd be a lot better brought up."

He crowed and snorted with appreciation. "You're the cutest! You're a perfect fiend, you know. I can't let you get away on that. In half an hour or so, I'll think up a repartee. I'm slow, but I get round to it. Mrs. Jaffrey, there's a joint right next door where the head waiter knows me. If you and Miss Mary would do me the honor—"

Mary had turned eagerly for her assent; something must be done. Marise could not quite face the restaurant, but she wanted above everything to keep Mary happy. The wish shone out of her in a touching graciousness.

"Won't Mr. Peavy come home with us instead?" she suggested. "There are sandwiches waiting for us, and I have a taxi out here."

Mary looked disappointed, but Mr. Peavy was charmed. He found their taxi and put them in with super-knowing skill. The very way he pulled down the extra seat had finish, an air of

one born to taxicabs. Seated, he clasped both hands over the end of his stick and looked at the two ladies in rich satisfaction.

"It's better to be born lucky than to be born handsome," he observed. "Of course, some are born both—like Miss Mary."

"Where does the luck for me come in?" Mary wanted to know.

"Oh, you're rare! You're too much for me." Mr. Peavy gave her up. "Mrs. Jaffrey, I'm going to talk to you. I can't keep up with Miss Mary. I'm no wit. I'm just a plain, middle-class American citizen. I live in this glitter and glare, but underneath I'm only a home boy." His chest expanded with his theme. "I've got an old mother that I think the world of, and she's just queer enough to like me. I get out there every Christmas, whether I can or not. No matter what you offer me at that time—no, sir. That dear old lady isn't going to be disappointed. I write every week, and my little wad keeps her going, and if ever I'm a decent chap when I might be something else, I owe it to that good woman's love and prayers. And I'm not ashamed of it."

He really meant it. His little brown eyes were almost moist. He was undoubtedly the excellent son he saw himself; it was a good face. Marise's courage nearly died before the problems of the future. She had made it her life lesson that she must accept Mary as she was, but she had not thought to prepare herself for Mary's husband. It was one thing to love and serve her fellow men in the great abstract, but quite another to have this complacent person displaying his oily virtues in her cab, and possibly in her family. A bitter thought that Hugh was right, and that commonness was something to be hated, rose to confront the creed she had followed through long difficult years. If she could only hear Hugh assert it, she could fight him, and so find her way back to the serene heights of human brotherhood on which she had labored. But Hugh had abandoned her, and she was miserably lost. She had taken many hard journeys for Mary's sake, but this trip up-town with Mary beside her was not the least of them.

Hannah, opening the door, murmured some announcement, but Marise was too preoccupied

to heed. She turned to the drawing-room, but stopped short in the doorway with a frightened sense that what she saw was too good to be true. Hugh was sunk deep in his chair, as though he had been there for a long time, and for a moment before he rose his eyes, somber and unwilling, looked straight into hers. "Well, I'm here—I'm back!" they accused her, and hers might have cried to him, "I'm glad!" if she had not so taught them to hide.

Glad! She was glad like the shipwrecked who sees the sail; her gladness was a divine tide of youth, pouring through all her waiting body. She was so strong, so light and fearless, she came so triumphantly to him across the big room, that Hugh's melancholy gave way to wonder, and there was a thrilled response in his rising.

"Well, Hugh!" It was marvelous that she could speak so composedly with this riot of happiness just under her voice. "So you came."

"Oh, yes—I came;" he had a weary derision for himself.

"Have you been here long?"

"I don't know." He looked vaguely about at the furniture, as though it might have kept

some record. "I was at an infernal dinner as long as I could stand it—and then I came."

Mr. Peavy had been relieving Mary of her coat with his masterly style in such matters, and he now came forward at her side, looking about the room with a connoisseur tilt of the head that seemed to say, "Good—very nice indeed—interesting—on the whole, unusually well done!" Marise had forgotten that he was a menace and that Mary presented difficulties. Her dear baby was found, and Hugh was going to be told about it, and all was exquisitely right with the world. She held out her hand to her child.

"Mary dear, come and meet Mr. Le Baron," she said.

Hugh had been startled by the name, or by the hidden song just under it, and he looked closely into Mary's face, shaped by family lines that he well knew. Of course, he did not actually guess the stupendous truth, but he felt mysterious currents in the air, hovering secrets, and his being tightened to a new alertness as he took the girl's hand.

"But Miss Mary who?" he demanded.

"Mary Healy;" it was Mary who spoke,

hastily, even defiantly, but Marise could not be hurt by anything just then; for Hugh had come back. She was overlooking her other guest, but Mary introduced him with the satisfaction of one who plays a leading trump: "Mr. Peavy—Mr. Al Peavy."

Mr. Peavy made Mr. Le Baron heartily welcome, and immediately identified him as the architect of the new Forty-ninth Street Theater.

"My profession, of course, has put me in touch with all the best theaters of the country," he explained, beaming his good will straight into Hugh's reluctant eyes. "I'm here, there, everywhere; it has been my fortune to spend several years in the second cultural city of the United States; so, when I saw the new Forty-ninth Street, I was qualified to appreciate it. I wrote a paragraph about it when it opened with *Honor Bright*. I remember I spoke of its admirable restraint and classic feeling—I gave it quite a puff. You may have read it at the time."

Marise was looking on in humorous apprehension, for Hugh's manners were not to be counted on, and she knew she might have to

make a quick rescue; but Hugh met the onslaught with nothing more hostile than a vague sound in his throat. His attention was fixed on Mary Healy. When they were seated about the dining-room table, he took pains to draw her out. Marise abetted him, and with Mr. Peavy applauding and marveling at her, Mary found herself gloriously restored to her rightful place. She was once more the leader, the little queen. She had forgotten that she had a trouble in the world as she let them look on at the mighty fun of being Mary Healy.

"I like to go to the theater, but it's awful to act," she told them. "Having to play you're some one else—I don't know—it makes you sort of ashamed and mad."

Mr. Peavy insisted that playing a part was a woman's favorite occupation, but Marise understood the hot young pride that found even posing before a camera an indignity. She liked her Mary! She might frequently want to shake her, but she respected the girl's force and felt the charm of her audacity. Mary's beauty had a ripe glow that held her eyes. She was too strongly built for grace, but she had a boy's bodily freedom, and her blouse of pale pink

crêpe outlined splendid shoulders. Marise turned to Hugh for sympathy in her content, but he had eyes only for Mary.

"I think you would act Miss Mary Healy very well," he said. "I can't seem to see you in any other rôle."

"The only time I ever made a hit was in the death of Little Eva," she began, then paused surprisedly at their burst of laughter. "Oh, well, I wasn't so husky when I was a kid," she explained. "They gave *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the benefit of the church or something, out at home. I was on the sofa, dying, and they were all around me singing, 'Eva, Eva, she's passing away'—you know the scene. Well, I was so afraid I'd cry that I made a face at them. Lawsy, but it brought down the house!"

They would have laughed if Mr. Peavy had not so squealed and shouted.

"One touch of nature," Hugh murmured. "What did you think of to-night's play?"

"Too much cigarettes," was the emphatic answer. "That's all right in a rough play, but those were supposed to be ladies. It wasn't true to life."

Her sledge-hammer finality amused Hugh, but Mr. Peavy smote the table with a fat brown fist.

"That's the sort of thing I like to hear a girl say," he declared. "I tell you, Mrs. Jaffrey, when a man's business takes him among chorus girls and theatrical stars—and I know them all, top-liners and supes, and they call me Al and think I'm a pretty good fellow—but sometimes it leaves me just plain lonely for the nice, modest, home-made kind of girls that you can take some pride in showing to your mother. That's what we all really like best."

Mr. Peavy's confidences and the insistence of his eyes in meeting hers left Marise oddly embarrassed, as though she were in the presence of some one who could not be trusted to keep on his clothes. For Mary's sake, she smiled encouragement, but it was a relief to have Hugh pick up the slain conversation and set it going again. The blessedness of having him there!

"I want to hear more against the play," he said. "The theater is never true to life, Miss Healy. Hit it again."

•

Mary was only too happy. "Well, there was that typewriter girl; she couldn't have held her job a week in a real office."

Hugh enjoyed that. "Why not?"

"Oh, she never could have worked up any speed, using her hands in that fancy way. And no girl with sense enough to buy a ticket on the subway is going to be taken in by a big stiff like that broker. There was one of his sort in my first office, and we liked him about the way we liked poison."

"Girls do get taken in," Hugh reminded her.

"Oh, yes;" Mary was heavily sarcastic; "that's their favorite indoor sport, according to the vice commissions and the movies. The millions that just go quietly about their jobs—you never seem to hear about them. There's a bunch of girls and fellows in my office, but you couldn't get a play out of them to save your neck. They just support their mothers and do up their blouses and keep an eye out for a husband. Pretty tame!"

Her scorn made them laugh.

"Where is this model office?" Hugh wanted to know.

"Engel and Weeks;" Mary tried not to say it too proudly. Hugh knew both her employers, and rejoiced in her characterizations of them until an arresting thought checked him.

"Look here—those proper young women in my office—do they talk like this about me?"

Mary had only pity for his ignorance. "Well, how did you suppose they talked?"

"With distinguished consideration and respect!"

"I don't think," Mary added. "Not at eight to sixteen per."

Hugh turned to share his amusement with Marise, and again he saw something that gripped his attention. Marise was watching Mary with lighted eyes that had forgotten to hide their secret; she was glad of her girl, indulgent, ready to be infinitely tender when Mary should let her in. It was a mother's look, and it sent a visible shock through Hugh. Pushing aside plate and glass, he watched them both with new intentness.

"Well, you know, Mr. Le Baron, it's natural," Mary was explaining with a consoling inflection. "You have to be so respectful to their

faces that you sort of take it out on them after hours. You may like them a lot, but you have to balance things up if you're a good American."

"A 'good American'—with the name of Healy," said Hugh deliberately.

Mary could again feel the joke of their secret. She sent a quick glance to meet her mother's smile as she made demure answer: "Well, my parents were born in this country."

Hugh had seen the look. He rested an elbow on the table and his hand closed tightly on his chin as he studied the face opposite.

"I think," he said slowly, like one feeling his way, "that perhaps you had a very unusual mother."

Mary flushed crimson, and the color was reflected in Marise's averted face. Mr. Peavy seized the opening.

"Mothers are all pretty fine! At least, the kind we used to get. And I guess the modern ones are made of the same old stuff underneath. I'm old-fashioned about mothers, Miss Mary. You may dislike me for it, but I want you to know the worst as well as the best of me. I may be only third from the bottom—"

"Marise, I want to speak to you," Hugh said in a low tone.

She glanced hesitatingly at the other two, but they were fencing joyously, and her murmured excuse, as she rose, was scarcely heeded. Hugh did not speak until they stood facing each other by the hearth in the drawing-room. Then he laid his hands on her shoulders.

"Who is this girl?"

Her smile was broken, blurred. "My daughter, Hughie."

He drew her to him and kissed her as her father might have done. The tears in his eyes made her own overflow. When they spoke again, they were sitting together on the couch, her hand fast in his.

"Oh, you wonder!" he said with caught breath. "You never gave up—all these years—you kept on—and you have found her. My dear girl, my dear girl!"

She told him the story, briefly, leaving much to be filled in at some calmer time. He was not deeply concerned about the past; the miracle of the present held him amazed and exclaiming.

"Why, but she is splendid," he cried. "Think how I have croaked about what she would be—

and here is this good and gallant child, with her straight eyes and her unsoiled spirit—she is of the people, but she isn't common! She's rare, Marise. And she is beautiful. What guardian angel did this for you?"

He had to stride about in his excitement, and Marise, watching him, felt a curious heaviness of spirit. He had not failed her in any way, he was moved to the very depths for her, ready to love and accept her child as she had never dreamed he could be. She did not understand why she had been stricken so sad and forlorn.

"And she's clever," Hugh piled it up. "She has good clear brains. The way she sized up Engel! Oh, she can be anything, that girl. She's a power. With the chance you can give her—"

"She does not want to come to me," Marise interrupted. "That is why no one has been told. She prefers her adopted mother and her own way of life." She offered it baldly, almost with hostility, and still she did not understand her own pain.

Hugh could not take the obstacle seriously. "That is rather fine of her," he said. "Oh, I like that. I like everything I see about her. You will win out in time; there is a good heart

there as well as a good understanding. She doesn't look like you, and yet"—he paused, smiling to himself over old memories—"and yet she makes me think of you at eighteen," he concluded simply. "That joyous confidence in life—oh, yes, I can see you in her. Ah, she's a dear thing, Marise!"

Marise suddenly knew her trouble. This flame of rage—people called it "seeing red." In all her life she had never known so fiercely uncivilized a moment. It could not last, of course; generations of training instantly asserted their power. Jealous of her own child! It was worse than base—it was vulgar. She shook it off, bodily, lifting her head proudly against it, endorsing Hugh's words.

"Yes—a dear thing. I am a very fortunate woman."

Sharp recollection brought him to a standstill. "Oh—when did you say it happened? Last week? Of course, of course!" He drew the deep breath of the comforted, but did not explain.

"Don't show her that you know," Marise said quickly, as the two young people came in to say good night.

Hugh thought he hid his excitement, but he shone on Mary like a father. Mary, however, was used to being a success, and accepted his warm approval as her natural right. Her self-satisfaction was never offensive; she was charming in her bravery and candor. While Mr. Peavy did his manners with noble fluency, she stood by basking in the social brilliance of her admirer.

"Mrs. Jaffrey, it has been a privilege to meet you and to be made welcome in your beautiful home;" Mr. Peavy almost had tears in the little brown eyes that clung so tightly to hers. "I can't tell you how it is, but I am always falling on some delightful adventure. Last week I blew in at a house party up at Larchmont—a regular palace of a house, private yacht, everything—and they wouldn't let me get away. I'm lucky, that's what it is. Mr. Le Baron, I shall be happy to send you the clipping about the Forty-ninth Street Theater. I think you won't find anything you dislike in it. Well, Miss Mary, parting is sweet sorrow—"

Mary went with him, and they heard the front door close on his eloquence, and the girl's

step mounting the stairs. When that had quite died away, they dared to exchange looks.

"My dear Marise," Hugh exclaimed, "where did you pick up that impossibly awful man?"

She laughed aloud, quite forgetting the little balcony just over her head and the curtained opening that gave light to the up-stairs hall. She had had so little occasion in her life to think of it, to care if she was overheard, that caution had never been impressed upon her. And it was a wicked relief to laugh. She had put down that hideous and unforgivable impulse of savagery, but it must have left its traces, for she was unkindly eager to laugh at Mary's friend.

"Oh, Hugh, wasn't he too dreadful!" she cried.

Even as she spoke the words, she felt guilty and ashamed. The sense of her disloyalty to the poor child spoiled the rest of Hugh's visit. He was deeply kind, still amazed and exalted for her, but, after he had gone, his joy seemed to her grievously impersonal and detached, the unselfish emotion of one who is merely an old friend. Certainly his kiss had said nothing else.

It was not a happy night. When she arose in the morning, a need of mutely begging Mary's pardon sent her in her dressing-gown to Mary's door.

The room was empty. Mary must have made a very early start. Marise asked Hannah about it when the latter brought her breakfast.

"What time did she go, Hannah?"

Hannah produced her news with prim satisfaction: "About an hour ago, m'am, without her breakfast and taking her bag." Her tone implied that she hoped this would be a lesson.

Marise set down the coffee pot, looking as shocked as heart could wish. "Her bag!"

"Yes, m'am, and all her things."

Marise half started up, then sank back again. Hannah had counted on a sensation, but not on this look of blind distress.

"The girl may have left a note," she conceded coldly. "She might at least have had the decency to do that. I will see."

There was a note, a folded slip of paper scrawled across by a wrathful pencil. It had neither address nor signature:

"If my friends are not good enough for you, then I'm not. This settles it."

Marise, reading and rereading the flying lines, remembered her uneasy conscience when she and Hugh had laughed together over the impossibly awful Mr. Peavy, and saw what had happened. The desolate, "*Oh!*" of her understanding was more than Hannah could bear.

"I tell you truly, m'am," she began, tense hands folded across her apron, "the girl was not worthy of your trouble. You could never have made a lady of her, or a fit companion—"

"Hannah, Hannah!" The cry smote Hannah silent, giving her a premonition of the crushing truth before it fell. "Why, that is Mary, that is my own baby, found and lost"—her voice trembled and fell—"found and lost. And it is all my own fault. I found her, and now she is lost."

Hannah had turned a congested red. Her helpless little rabbit mouth gasped feebly once or twice, then she flung up her hands and ran from the room. Marise had no heart then to wonder about her. All she could see was her own gigantic failure.

"We never learn," was her bitter conclusion. "We die what we were born. I have spent half my life learning to love my fellow men, and at

the first real test I went right back to the thing I was born. To class feeling and shrinking and ridicule. I called the poor little man dreadful and I laughed—that is just what I should have done twenty years ago. And I have lost Mary by it—hopelessly; I could have struck her in the face and done less harm. I love her, but love of fellow men—do I really know what it means?” She had been identifying that love with the service of the past years: she had proved them one to Hugh, but now they seemed poles apart. “I have been sorry, and I have worked and given; but that is nothing, nothing. I haven’t loved. To spend all one’s life on a lesson, and then not know the rudiments! Ah, I can’t go on. I give up.”

In all her hard life, Marise’s courage had never fallen so low. She had no thought of going after Mary, of trying to repair the damage. Mary’s fierce young pride could scarcely have received a more venomous hurt. All her mother could do now was to accept the consequences of her own failure and live with them as best she might. Mrs. Healy had won.

In her absorption, Marise was unaware that Hannah had come back and was trying to say

something. Hannah had to make several beginnings before Marise lifted her head. Then the look on the faithful face startled her into attention. Hannah, too, seemed to have been staring into abysmal depths of failure.

"It's all my fault, m'am. You can blame it all on me." She wrung her shaken hands. "I didn't know. I tried to put her in her place, God forgive me! And I used words that can never be forgot. I'll go, Mrs. Jaffrey, I'll go at once and never darken your doors again. For it was I helped to drive her out and break your heart."

"Ah, Hannah!" Marise caught her gown and, drawing her nearer, laid a head against her arm. "It wasn't you—it was I, and civilization, and stupid old habits that come down in the blood. Don't suffer, dear soul—we are all to blame. And if you leave me, I shall lie down and die." Her tears were on the black sleeve. Had she only realized it, Marise's record was not all failure, for in that moment she loved Hannah, loved her tenderly and gratefully, with a healing sense of human sisterhood. The day was not quite so hard after she and her maid-servant had cried together.

There was plenty of work awaiting her in the study. For a week Marise had scarcely opened her mail, and her secretary had been kept at home by illness. Affairs that should have been attended to days before gave her an absorbed hour before the usual interruption—"A young woman to see you, m'am." Girls were always admitted: Marise would have no barriers. They need not even send up their names. She laid down her pen at once, and smiled sadly to find herself wishing the old wish—that it might be Mary.

It was, after all, not wholly dissociated from Mary; for May Laguna stood shrinking against the table, frightened eyes on the doorway. Marise's first thought was that the poor child was outrageously painted; then, as she came nearer, she saw that the red lights and black shadows had been laid on by a heavier hand than May's.

"Why, May, you are ill," she said, and seeing how the wisp of a body trembled, put an arm about her and drew her to a chair. May drooped back into the cushions with the utter relief of one who comes home. Presently, finding a glass at her lips, she drank obediently,

then looked up into the concerned face bending over her.

"I don't mean to — — make you no trouble," she said faintly. "But— — you was so good to me — — No one ever spoke to me — — like you did."

She could not know the passion of gratitude that answered her stammered avowal. Perhaps the willing service had, after all, been akin to love.

"I will take care of you, May," Marise promised, sitting down beside her and laying her finger-tips on the fluttering pulse. "Have you seen a doctor? Do you know what is the matter?"

"Oh, yes." May was almost too tired to explain. "I had them before, but I couldn't hide this one. Hem—I don't know what you call it."

"Hemorrhage?"

"That's it. A week ago—oh, something awful. And Charley, of course, he got right out."

"Left you?" Marise exclaimed.

"He was afraid he'd catch it," was the simple explanation. "I hadn't only a dollar. I wasn't hungry, though. The woman, she let me stay

on till to-day, but—" Her voice trailed off into silence, her eyelids drooped.

"And this might have been my Mary!" The thought lifted Marise to her feet, made her heart big in her side and her arms strong. This was the world's lost child, brought back to her door for comfort and shelter. She took off the great absurd hat, then lifted the spent body and half carried it up-stairs to the room that had been so lovingly made ready for the lost child.

She undressed May herself while Hannah summoned the doctor and ran errands with humble eagerness. When the ragged, metallic yellow hair had been hidden by the soft lace of a cap, the scars of experience were mysteriously gone, and the wasted face was that of a little girl. May had submitted, but she had never asked to understand, and the merciful stupidity had saved her soul. Battered little cipher though she was, she was no more evil than a stray puppy, and there was something of the puppy's innocent and adoring gratitude in the eyes that followed Marise's movements. Presently her hand found a fold of Marise's gown and she kissed it.

"I wish I could die for you," she murmured.

"My dear!" Since the baby Mary went, no one had heard just that voice from Marise. It brought May's eyes back to her face, dimly questioning.

"Why are you so good to me?" she murmured.

Marise tried to tell her. "I had a child once, a little girl named Mary. And then—she was lost. And so all lost girls are dear to me."

May was too weak to wonder at the tale. "Mary," she repeated. "I'm Mary, too. And I was lost. Oh, I couldn't be her, could I?"

She might have been, poor, bewildered waif. Some old physical barrier went down before a torrent of feeling. Marise gathered the world's lost child against her shoulder and held her close.

"Every lost Mary is my Mary," she said. "Yes, you are one of them, May. You are my lost child."

May sighed content, stirring as though she settled breast feathers against a warm nest.

Her bright color was gone and she drowsed with growing weakness. The doctor, coming soon after, was cheerful in the sick room, but

Marise knew what she would hear when she followed him down-stairs. The girl was dying. It was not even a matter of days; a few hours might end it. She ought to be removed to a hospital at once.

"Let her die here," said Marise, and would not be argued down. She consented to a nurse, but when the woman came, gave her little to do. May's eyes clung to her, and there was an exaltation in answering the appeal with something greater than kindness. When May had to be propped up with pillows, to ease her faint breath, Marise took from the closet a white corduroy dressing-gown, lined with rosy silk, and wrapped it about her. May caressed it with adoring fingers.

"It's too grand for me," she whispered.

Marise made a strange answer: "But I bought it for you!" May could not shape questions. She could only smile and pour out unutterable love from great watching eyes that had never clearly understood anything since they had opened on a devouring world.

Night came. Mary Healy would be going to her chosen home, Hugh would be turning to his own varied interests after the busy day. Marise

thought of them remotely and without pain, as though she and May had embarked together and the shores of reality were fading from sight. She had never before seen death come, and she had pictured the watchers as armed guards, fighting it off until the last breath ended the bitter struggle; but, as the night wore on, she found that it was only the carrying of a spent child in her arms to meet the stronger arms held down for her. Whenever May lifted her heavy eyes to the face just above hers, she smiled, deeply, trustfully, in utter content. To the very last she fingered her soft dressing-gown.

"Mine?" she asked wonderingly.

"Yours—to take with you," said Marise very distinctly.

May curled closer into the velvety warmth and did not speak again. Toward morning Marise delivered her burden, and the world's lost child was carried home.

Marise slept most of the next day. Hugh, coming in at lunch time, had heard the story, and the room was sweet with violets when she woke up. It was like that other awakening, when Mary had been found. A breath of the

forgotten ecstasy came back, quickening her tenderness, filling her with strength to begin again. Her despair looked to her now like childish petulance, seen across the deepening experience of the past twenty-four hours. The weight of death in her arms had ennobled life; the old shrinking was gone, the bodily dread of offense. The little room was empty and the wind had been sweeping through it all day, but it had a history now, and its memories could be distilled into wisdom. Marise, standing in its doorway, knew what she must do.

Mary should live where she pleased, unharassed, and there should be forgiveness and affection between them, a new relation, begun that very night. Marise's spirit rushed ahead of her as she hurriedly dressed. She longed to begin with apology for what had been said, but it might be wiser to let that bury itself. May Laguna's coming and death would be reason enough for the visit, and then, through the gap thus made, Marise would quietly admit herself defeated, ready to leave Mary's life unmolested if only she might have her friendship. Mary could not long stay shut against her on those terms, and Mrs. Healy, victorious, could afford

to be generous. Marise felt very humble and happy and clear of purpose as she walked across the park. She planned to arrive just after Mary's return from the office.

There was no humming within this time, as she paused on the landing to get her breath, but a quick step answered her knock. Mrs. Healy had flung wide the door as though in joyous greeting, but her face darkened as she saw who it was. It looked as though the door might be closed again, and Marise stepped quickly over the threshold.

"I have come in peace, not in war, Mrs. Healy," she began, then faltered before the terrible familiarity of the little, crowded, close room and the throbbing heat of the steam pipes. She had scarcely looked about her in that one tense visit, and yet she seemed to know the face of every colored card in the flock that swept the bright green walls, the detail of every little platform and balustrade of the mahogany-colored center table; the smell of hot gold paint from the radiator made her faint with its associations of shock and distress. She sank into a chair unasked, turning so white that Mrs. Healy brought her a glass of water.

The act broke down the other woman's determined silence. She seated herself facing Marise, her mighty arms folded across her chest. The week had put gray in her bright hair, deep lines in her fine face.

"If you come about the theayter," she said sternly, "I had as much right there as anybody else, and so had Henry Martin. We paid for our seats. I go where I please, asking permission of no one."

The night at the theater seemed ancient history. Marise had even forgotten her own unprecedented wrath. She brushed that aside unanswered.

"I hoped Mary would be here by this time," she said. "I have something to tell her." Then, meeting only guarded hostility, she threw aside preliminaries. "Oh, you need not fight me, Mrs. Healy. Everything is as you would have it. You have won."

Mrs. Healy had dropped one great hand on her knee and was leaning forward on a bent elbow. "Was Mary to meet you here?" she asked, with puzzled brows.

"Oh, no. She didn't know I was coming. You will let me wait for her, won't you?"

Mrs. Healy looked absently at the clock and then toward the door while her thoughts made difficult choice of a question. "Wasn't she to stay with you a week?" she finally brought out.

Marise had come prepared to be unstintedly generous. "Yes; but never mind. I don't intend to claim anything. You have nothing to fear."

Mrs. Healy suddenly smote her knees with exasperated fists. "What is it, then? Did you quarrel? What have you come here about? Can't you say it out?"

"Didn't Mary tell you?" There was a secret joy in the thought that Mary had not told her grievance.

"How could she tell me? I haven't seen her since Sunday."

"Since Sunday!" Marise shrank back in her chair, groping wildly to remember what day this was. Wednesday—for Monday night they had gone to the theater, and Tuesday night May had died in Mary's room. Then—

"Mrs. Jaffrey, has aught happened to my girl in your house?" Mrs. Healy's voice was a threat.

"But she isn't in my house," Marise cried.

"Why, she left early yesterday morning, before I was up, taking all her things. Do you mean that she did not come home?"

Mrs. Healy's eyes stared the truth before her lips repeated it: "Holy Mother, she's not been here!"

VII

DINNER had waited a long time when Marise reached home. She and Mrs. Healy had made a weary round of Mary's friends, hunting for news. Hostility had been wiped out; their motherhood had become one force, having one object. At first Marise had thought only of accident, but Mrs. Healy had scouted the suggestion.

"What would Mary get herself run over for?" she wanted to know. "She's not that kind." And, indeed, it did not seem likely. Neither needed to suggest the usual dire possibility for the unsheltered girl. Mary was not that kind, either. When at last they discovered that she had been at the office as usual both days, Mrs. Healy dropped the quest with a calmness that amazed Marise.

"She's mad as a hornet about something, and she'll come back when she's good and ready," she decided. "I guess that's all we can do to-night."

They stood on a poorly lighted corner, saloon

doors swinging on every hand, the sidewalks swarming with laboring men, plodding home bent and tired, yet not too weary to turn and look into Marise's face as they passed. She felt the oppression of their stare for Mary's sake rather than her own, and she was glad that her poor little Mary was safe from it.

"I can go on looking," she urged. "If you will tell me where—"

"There's no call to worry, now we know she was to her work;" Mrs. Healy spoke with patronizing kindness. "She's got money, and she can take care of herself. Go home to your dinner, Mrs. Jaffrey, and I'll do the same. And when she shows up, I'll let you know." Then she turned back to add: "You say you know what ails her?"

"I know why she is angry at me," Marise admitted. "But why she should treat you in this way—"

A giant shrug answered. "I guess I got a right to go to the theayter when I choose," Mrs. Healy observed. She was evidently girded for a battle on that subject.

Hannah, opening the door, spoke mysteriously of a young man who had been waiting

over an hour to see Mrs. Jaffrey. That Hannah had submitted so patiently to his unexplained persistence, and made no protest now on the score of dinner, showed a crippled spirit. Hannah would never again try to get rid of people with the old freedom.

Any presence just then meant news of Mary. Marise hurried in to meet it, her furs, dropping back from her shoulders, framing her sumptuously in the eyes of a depressed young man who had had more than an hour to study his surroundings. She deepened the impression by speaking with the imperiousness of anxiety.

"I have seen you before. Who are you?"

Coming nearer, she thought that she had made a mistake, for the face was strange to her, a solemn face, so pale at the present moment that a powdering of freckles seemed to hover detached above the long nose. His whiteness must be a transitory pallor—no robust-looking man in the middle twenties could normally show such a color; and yet his rising and the pause before his slow answer gave an effect of unshakable composure.

"I'm Henry Martin, Mrs. Jaffrey." A second pause gave her a chance to recognize the name,

but for the moment it meant nothing to her. "You saw me at the theater," he added.

She recognized him then, though she had seen little but the top of his head that night. She had thought he was eliminated from the situation, but she knew now that he was in the very center of it. This was no light errand that had brought him. She sat down, motioning him to do the same.

"Where is Mary?" she asked sharply.

It took him another long moment to produce speech. "That's what I came to tell you. She's all right," he added, looking up from the folded hands that lay quietly together on his knee.

"I know that!" was the erect answer.

His eyes returned to the study of his interlaced fingers. It took a restless movement from her to get him started. "She didn't tell you, but we've been going together, Mary and I, for two years. I've been—I can't talk about that. Guess you can understand it, though." She nodded, then added a word of understanding, to hurry his almost immovable speech. Presently he got it going again.

"I don't mean that anything was promised. I hadn't seemed to make much headway till

just lately. Then all at once— There was a Sunday night when we looked at an empty flat—that almost—she didn't quite say—and yet—”

“You mean she encouraged you,” said Marise, trying desperately for patience.

“I mean she kissed me,” was the bald answer. “And Mary isn't a girl to—well, you know that. And then—all this happened.” His glance went drearily about the big and beautiful room, outer symbol of all that had happened.

“Yes,” Marise prompted.

“And, of course, I looked to give her up.” Again his eyes were lifted straight to hers. “I played fair, Mrs. Jaffrey. I'm a decent fellow, if I do say it, and I've got a good position—I'm foreman of a printing shop, and that isn't so bad at twenty-six; but my mother took in washing, and I carried it home after school, and I guess I know where I belong. And I wasn't going to keep Mary down if she could get up in the world.”

Marise, watching him intently, offered neither confirmation nor dissent. Her one concern was to get to the end of the story.

"And then Mary wouldn't give you up?" she suggested.

"That's right." Her understanding surprised him. "We had it out, hot and heavy, more than once—queer, for me to be standing out and Mary for it! And then yesterday she left word at the shop for me to meet her at the noon hour." He was coming to the hard part now, and Marise could not help him. She could only hold herself still and wait. "So I did. Well, she said hard things about—about it here, Mrs. Jaffrey, and that she'd left you for good—and that if I'd go down to the City Hall, she'd marry me then and there. It was take it or leave it. Marry her then, or she'd never see me again. And me crazy about her."

His dropped voice showed how the argument had ended. A quick breath from Marise recognized it, but he lifted a warning hand.

"Hold on! Yes, I went, all right. We got married. And then we went back to our jobs. Well, I'm a slow fellow, Mrs. Jaffrey. Mary's quick as light, but I've got to kind of work things out. And all the afternoon I was working at it and working at it. How I'd seem, sneaking in and marrying a girl just when

✱

she'd a big chance in life. Money, too, perhaps. She'd said things about—about all this, but Mary's got some temper, and I began to see round and past her mad till I was pretty sick. 'Twasn't square to Mrs. Healy, either, but we were going to go up there after dinner and fix that up—and she's always been for it. But it was you, and what Mary could have had without me, and how when she'd cool down she'd know it. First I thought I'd better just fall under a car. Then I saw what I had to do." He was forgetting his listener in the pain of what was coming. The story moved faster.

"So I went up—where we'd agreed to meet, and Mary was already there, so glad the fuss was all over, and not a bit scared, and so pretty—and I had to tell her. She couldn't understand. If she'd got mad right away, it would have been easier. She just—my God, it was like twisting her neck. Then, by and by, she got her back up, like I'd hoped she would, and she called me a quitter and a coward, and I went away. I left her there without me—I can prove it, Mrs. Jaffrey. You won't have any trouble having a marriage like that annulled. We haven't even spoken since. I guess

she stayed on at the hotel last night, but I don't know where she is now. She may be home. I'll help you any way I can. God knows, I'm sorry."

Marise held herself very still until she was sure that the impulse of her heart could be justified by cool reason. Then she looked into the solemn face, plain, yet full of character—the face of a man.

"Does she really love you, Henry?"

At the question, or the name, his composure broke, and the pallor was drowned as the young blood surged up. For an instant she saw him shaken from head to foot. And yet the tumult could not disturb his slow speech.

"Well—she thinks she does," he finally brought out, so temperately that she could have smiled if she had not been near tears. She drew her furs about her and rose.

"Take me to her," she commanded. "She did not go home from the office—she must be at the hotel. Take me there."

They made the trip in a silence that was never awkward. Henry kept his eyes down, but he was mercifully free from self-consciousness. Marise, at liberty to look her questions

into his face, presently forgot that she had found it plain as she deciphered the answers. It was a face that a child would trust or an employer choose from a crowd of applicants. The friendly quality of her silence must have reached him, for he tried to smile as he held out his hand, a little awkwardly, to help her from the car. She let her hand rest lightly on his arm as they went up the steps together.

Entering the portals of a very new hotel, they passed between columns of imitation onyx and banks of imitation rubber plants to the bright gold cage of what looked like an imitation elevator. When this had jerked them past their floor, then dropped them below it, and finally released them approximately at its level, Marise stopped her guide.

"I want to go in alone," she said. "Wait here. And remember—this is not a question of what I want or what you want, but of what is best for Mary. Nothing else on earth matters to me."

Her eyes were on his face, looking for guidance, and she liked it that he made no least attempt to soften or influence her. An economical nod both accepted her condition and indicated the door.

Mary's "Come in!" was startled. The opening door showed her kneeling beside a packed bag, her head lifted, rigid with expectation. When she saw who it was, she rose defensively to her feet. She was squared for battle, eyes held level, breathing visibly through her nose, but Marise saw only how the poor child had been hurt. The glow of confident youth was gone; in the past twenty-four hours Mary had met life in a head-on encounter and been badly thrown. The dimmed splendor was so touching that her mother could not stop to be prudent and careful.

"Why, Mary darling!" She crossed swiftly to her, laying her hands on the unwilling shoulders. "Why didn't you tell me about Henry? He's splendid—I like him so much. You ought to have let me know him sooner."

Had there been one ounce of pretense in what she said, a flaw in her sincerity, Mary's long look would have found her out. But Marise had learned her life lesson better than she knew. She liked Henry.

"I didn't think you'd see it," Mary jerked out. "See what he is, I mean."

"Why not, dear?"

"Well—he can't help getting ink under his nails."

"Ah, what does that matter!"

"Oh, I don't care." The shoulders were melting under the warm touch. "But you didn't like Mr. Peavy, and he's so much more—oh—showy and—"

Marise bravely took it up. "No; I didn't like Mr. Peavy—he was pretentious. But Henry is genuine; he is a real man."

"Oh, Mrs. Jaffrey, he is!" Mary's face had flashed into life. "Nobody half knows how splendid he is! But he's—well, he's slow-spoken; he's quick enough at his work, you bet—foreman of that big shop and him twenty-six!—but it takes him time to get his words out. He don't do himself justice with strangers. And I used to think he was homely—and I was afraid—oh, I'd kill any one who laughed at Henry!"

"But no one with any sense would." Marise sat down on the bed, drawing the girl down beside her. "Tell me about him," she said.

It came in a torrent. No need to ask Mary

if she really loved him! When at last her heart was eased of its fulness, she looked at her mother with shy but unveiled eyes.

"And, of course, that's why I've been so cussed," she confessed. "It was part because of poor mama, but, oh dear, I hadn't known how much I— He's so *good*, Mrs. Jaffrey! I wasn't going to give him up for anybody."

"Poor child, fighting it all out by herself!" Marise drew her closer.

Mary suddenly put both arms about her mother, burying wet eyes in her shoulder.

"Oh, I've been so hateful," she breathed. "I was so afraid I'd be taught something—smart Alec! And all the time I was dying to give in—oh, I wanted to just fall down and worship you! You were so fine and beautiful, and so miles above a little mutt like me—and when once in a great while you'd speak of something common—oh, like sauce pans, or night shirts, or—or boils—I'd be so grateful, I wanted to cry! I was crazy to love you! And the more I wanted it, the uglier I acted. Oh, Mrs. Jaffrey—"

"Mary!" It was a cry straight from Marise's heart. "Don't call me that, darling—

every time you do it, it is like a stone in my face. I am your mother!"

"Mother!" Mary whispered the word, then brought it out more boldly. "*Mother!*" A long breath of wonder and emotional exhaustion shook her. "I can't seem to believe it," she stammered.

"But you're not sorry, Mary?"

"Sorry! You should worry," was the heartfelt answer, as Mary lifted her wet face. Marise had found her child.

"Oh, but poor Henry!" Marise started up. "He is out there all this time." She crossed to the door, but paused with her hand on the knob for a grave warning. "Be very good to him, Mary, for he has acted like an honorable gentleman."

"Oh, I'll be good to him, all right," Mary admitted, drying her eyes.

Henry came in and stood there before them, whitely ready for sentence, offering no plea. Marise took another deep look into his face, then delivered judgment.

"My children, I am going to ask something of you. I want you to put aside that marriage yesterday, forget that it happened. No, no—

don't look so frightened!" She laughed at them, but still they waited with stricken eyes, and she hurried on. "You love each other, and I have no wish to come between you. But I want my daughter married fittingly from my house." She turned to Mary. "My dear, you don't know how kind and sorry my world has always been, the thoughtful things it has done for me, because of my great loss. Ah, people have been so lovely, darling! They have never forgotten. And now I want to say to them all, 'See, here is my little girl, safe and sound, good and beautiful!' I want to ask them to the wedding. Will you do that for me?"

Mary was appalled. "Before a lot of grand people?"

"Dear friends who will be glad to see you."

"Like those four girls Sunday morning?"

"Why not? You are my daughter."

Again Mary's eyes searched hers. "And you wouldn't be one bit ashamed of me, before all them?" she burst out. "Oh, I know I'm different, and I don't care—but don't you?"

There was only love and truth in Marise's answer. "Why, Mary, I am so proud of you! I can't wait to let them see my daughter."

Mary's dismay was wavering into elation. "At your apartment?" she asked.

"My dear, it would not hold a tenth of them! We will have the marriage in church, and then your dearest and mine will come to the house. That is the way that I will tell the world I have found you—the marriage of her daughter Mary.' What do you say?"

Mary drew a deep breath before the adventure and straightened gallantly. "I'm game," she said. "But it's going to be a pretty stiff job for Henry."

Both women turned to him. He smiled, a quaint, lovable, one-sided smile that did not disturb his abysmal calm.

"Well—I guess I deserve some punishment," he admitted.

"And now," said Marise, fastening her furs, "come home with me for some dinner, and then, Mary Jaffrey, you go back to Mrs. Healy and stay there until your wedding-day."

"Yes—mother," said Mary.

The week before the wedding, Marise had to run away. She was worn out with the excitement and rejoicing of her kind world. Mary,

too, had had to leave the office when the newspapers discovered where she was; but she was firm in her determination to go back to her work after the wedding trip.

"Sitting around a flat—dusting the what-not—doing cross-stitch on the towels—there's nothing in all that for me," she explained. "I've got to have real work, and something ahead to try for. I mean to learn all I can about the printing business on the side, and then, when Henry gets his own shop, I'll go in with him. Some sport, that!"

She was shining over the prospect as another girl might shine over amusements and possessions, and Marise loved her for it, though she laughed.

"Some one must dust the flat," she observed.

"Oh, mama'll do all that," was the comfortable answer. "Mama eats up work—she can't get enough since she sold the farm."

"Mrs. Healy can't have the babies for you, my dear!"

Mary paused at that, a growing smile in her eyes. "Oh, well, I'll take a little time off for them," she conceded. "But it won't be the end of me, you know. I like kids, but, glory, I like

to get on!" For all her shining, there was something level and steady underneath, a power that was not merely the enthusiasm of youth and health. Whatever direction she took, Mary Martin would get on.

Her mother made no attempt to influence the direction. She had offered the house on the sound for the free week that would be allowed Henry, but Mary preferred a "trip" and hotels, and Marise gave her only sympathy. The model flat above Mrs. Healy's was to Mary all that heart could wish, and though Marise presented the furniture, she let Mary do the choosing. The one thing that she took completely into her own hands was the wedding gown. Mary was surprised that it was to be only tulle, with the satin nearly all underneath, but when she tried on the finished product, she stood a long time between the mirrors, staring thoughtfully at the effect.

"Here—just you leave it on a minute," she had said to madame and her assistants, with the unawed directness that was a secret joy to her mother. So they respectfully fell back and waited while Mary thought it out.

No clothes can make another person of any

one—witness the shop models, dressed in the best that Paris can do, with hair and slippers to accord, and yet unmistakably and from head to foot that which they are. But clothes can bring out what is already there, awaiting its chance. Mary, standing absolutely still, a little crown of orange blossoms on her bright hair, her fine face in repose, was suddenly her mother's daughter. The art of the gown had for a moment given her back her birthright. Then she moved and spoke, and the illusion vanished. She was again the nicest kind of a working girl.

"All right—take her off," she said, and made no further comment; but when she and her mother separated, later in the afternoon, Mary kept her for a moment while she struggled with difficult speech.

"Listen—I guess there's a lot I don't know. That dress sort of found me out," she said at last. They stood under the Zodiac Signs of the Grand Central, for Marise was going down to the sound house to rest. She pressed the girl's hand against her side.

"But there is nothing on earth you can't

learn, Mary Jaffrey—if you are open to it!” The words had a ring, and Mary straightened in response.

“Well, you watch me,” she promised.

The old house lay steeped in sun. Remnants of snow, melting into the black earth, gave out an odor that suggested fresh violets, and there was a stir of coming spring in the air. Boats sped up and down the sound with a new zest, and in all living things the sap was rising.

Marise was at first too exalted to rest. She was out and about all day, making plans for her garden and for changes in the house, and her nights passed like moments in a fevered reliving of all that had happened, from the first wonder over family lines in Mary’s face to the generous rush of her kind world when it had found itself bidden to “the marriage of her daughter Mary.” How it had rejoiced with her—how dear people were! The eager questions echoed in her ears and would not let her sleep; she was forever retelling the tale. For three days her spirit seemed to skim the earth, as unhampered as though the body had been cast off; and then, on Sunday morning, the fresh air

and Hannah's persistent glasses of milk accomplished their work, reuniting body and spirit, and Marise stumbled out into the sunshine, almost too weary to hold up her head. Hannah, watching for this moment, had put a steamer chair at the glassed-in end of the veranda and covered it invitingly with a rug. Marise obediently curled down and knew dimly that she was being covered and tucked in; then she went fathoms deep into sleep.

The sun was on the other side of the house when at last she began to emerge. She came up slowly, tranquil, with cleared vision. The sense of rush was over, the exhausting elation stilled. The facts of life again took their orderly places, and a question that she had been consciously avoiding came gravely forward for consideration.

There was Hugh. The barrier between his life and hers had been miraculously swept away; he had accepted Mary with a wholehearted enthusiasm that Marise had never dreamed possible. She was free to love him, and, lying there with closed eyes, still breathing the deep breaths of her long sleep, she knew that she did love him, not just with youth

and senses, as she had loved Arnold, but with her mind and soul as well as with her released heart. But did Hugh still want it? The question darkened the universe. He had been the dearest possible friend through all the tumult, but he had not sought one thing for himself. Did he not realize that the barrier was down? Or had it fallen too late, was he content to leave things as they were? The doubt pressed on Marise's heart till it forced from her a distressed, pleading—

"Hughie!"

"Yes, Marise!" A living voice spoke just over her head, and a willow chair creaked, as though some one who had been leaning back had started forward. Her eyes, springing open, looked straight into Hugh's.

"I didn't know you had waked up," he said, and so the mighty blush that had risen to drown Marise sank back undetected, and a glimmer of laughter was all that showed of her secret.

"Well, how do you do?" she asked politely.

"Very well indeed, thank you."

"Have you been here all day?"

"Oh, not quite." He patted her hand through the rug. "Nice to see you! What have you been doing with yourself down here?"

"Oh, making plans. I am going to make some changes in the house, Hugh. Will you be my architect?"

"I will be your anything on God's earth that you will let me," he said, and sighed. "What do you want done to the house?"

Marise threw off her wraps and rose, suddenly light-hearted and deliciously young.

"I hear teacups," she said. "Oh, Hugh, isn't life wonderful? And I am so hungry!"

He followed her in to the fire and the tea table that Hannah was setting forth with good things. Hannah returned his greeting with submissive graciousness. She had never been the same stout opponent since the night when she had had to say, with streaming tears, "I beg your pardon, Miss Mary, and may God bless your return to your home." Mary's cheerful, "Don't you worry, Hannah, I enjoyed it!" had left them good friends, but nothing could make Hannah forgive herself. To

welcome Hugh was part of her unremitting self-punishment. When she left the room, Marise looked after her with touched understanding.

"It is hard to be Hannah," she said.

"It is hard to be me, too," Hugh insisted, standing beside her, cup in hand.

"Why?" she asked with intelligent interest.

"I have to live all alone."

"You can have in the Franzen Quartette!"

She could laugh now at that old grievance.

"Not very well for breakfast. They send me up bad coffee at my place; but nobody cares." Hugh was very sorry for himself. "Nobody likes me."

"Mary likes you. She calls you—" Marise paused, smiling deeply to herself.

"Well, what?"

"The elderly gentleman who keeps blowing up about something."

Hugh had to laugh. "'Elderly'—the brat! Did you confound and abash her by telling her my real age?"

"Ah, my dear, anything over thirty-five is elderly to nineteen."

"True. And I suppose she thinks the fun is all over for us," said Hugh, bringing his chair close to hers.

"In one way, perhaps it is," Marise admitted, her eyes on the fire. "When we start out, we have a little bottle of glamour, to pour over the people we care for—it makes a magic world. But by this time we have broken the bottle, and we see each other as we are."

The "each other" was spoken impersonally, but Hugh seemed to find cheer in it.

"Well, just how do you see me?" he asked, setting down his cup to give her an unimpeded view.

She turned, leaning back in her chair for clearer vision, and saw as always the face of the little boy, the black-eyed, pretty, lovable little scamp, just under the lined, experienced face of the man. Her heart leaped toward him. It was a wonder that she could keep her voice so casual.

"Why, I see a very true and loyal gentleman," she thought it out; "a perfect friend, a man of pungent brains and high ideals, rather peppery, but with the sweetest nature I have ever known."

His lifted hands expressed a humorous despair for her. "My poor child, you haven't broken your little bottle of glamour!"

"Aren't you like that?" she asked with interest.

"God forgive me, no."

She thought that over. "Well, I really don't care if you are not," she concluded comfortably.

"Ah, I will try to be—I will give my life to it. Now shall I tell you how I see you?"

He dared her to let him, but she slipped aside from the challenge. "I think you know more about houses than you do about ladies," she said coolly. "Come up-stairs and see if what I want can be done."

That started one of his tirades. "Oh, you modern women are so restless! Why can't you take one thing at a time—sit comfortably till you finish your tea, instead of rushing on to something else? It's a disease. Sit down again. I will neither bore nor annoy you—I promise it. You won't have to keep changing the subject."

He was very cross, and his feelings were outraged. Marise, standing over him, waited in-

scrutably for the inevitable penitence. Half a minute brought it.

"I don't mean to be a rude beast," he apologized. "But it's Sunday. I will come down to-morrow and talk about the house. To-day I want to talk about you and me. It is what I came for, dear. I'm afraid it has got to be said."

She let a grave smile come out. "But isn't the house you and me?"

He sprang up. "Ah, if you put it that way!"

She moved quickly to the stairs, to forbid any further advance just then. She had hidden for too many years to emerge all at once, and Hugh, obeying the silent command, gave a semblance of attention to the rooms overhead, tapping for beams and measuring spaces for new windows. Two rooms were to be thrown together and a bath added for Mary.

"I want her and Henry here all they will come;" Marise spoke as if she warned him, then blushed like a girl before his understanding:

"Yes, dear!"

"I am going to keep the southwest room my-

self," she hurried on. "I could add another room over the veranda, couldn't I?"

"For Hughie?"

She would not hear. "And I want a big sun-window put in the southeast room." She threw open a door. "Come and look. That will be perfectly possible, won't it?"

He paused beside her in the doorway of a big room, the most important of them all. It was still shrouded in its winter coverings, but the shades had been raised, and they could look out over the broad expanse of the sound, golden now under the setting sun.

"Why don't you take this for yourself?" he asked.

He did not dream to what this room of morning sun and wide view was being dedicated; and yet the little boy that he had once been was there, close between them. She slipped a hand into his.

"I'm only thirty-nine, Hughie," she confided.

In time of great disaster, such as earthquake or fire, a whole city is sometimes drawn into close brotherhood. Neither class nor personal distinction remains standing; everybody loves

everybody, helps everybody, while the divine openness lasts. That was what a great joy did to a smaller world, on the day of Mary Jaffrey's wedding.

Long before the appointed hour, crowds that had read the romantic story and wanted to see the final chapter were blocking the sidewalks about the church, till there was only a narrow lane, kept open with difficulty, for the fortunate bearers of admission cards. The latter filled the awning to the bursting point by the time the church doors were opened and the queue of motors began to form.

Once in the church, excitement dropped to awe, for the organ was speaking of solemn things. The guests passed through a splendor of roses and spring blossoms. Marise had in her time considered big weddings vulgar and condemned display, but this was a different matter. She had called in her world to rejoice over her child, and no beauty of blossom and branch could be spared. This was not a "big wedding," but a festival of loving hearts.

And so they all felt it. Hugh, taking Mrs. Healy up the aisle on his arm, Mr. Peavy, ushering Marise's aunts and cousins to seats,

Cousin Sherman, rescuing Henry's frightened Aunt Peggy from behind a pillar and escorting her to the family pews—all were one for that hour. Everybody acknowledged his neighbor, smiling, making friendly room, but in all the great throng no one spoke. The church was full to the farthest corner when the ushers formed in the aisle and the wedding march rolled down to summon the bride.

She came with her hand on her mother's arm, white as her wedding veil, but fearless, her eyes lifted to the chancel for the first sight of Henry, waiting for her almost unnoticed. The standing congregation, turned to see her, breathed audibly behind closed lips for the beauty of the girl and the still exaltation of her mother. Marise seemed taller than they had known her, and she brought her child up to the altar like a holy offering.

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together—"

At the human voice, the tension relaxed, and a rustle that was like a sigh passed through the crowd. Many eyes blurred, but Mary looked into Henry's face with the glimmer of a smile.

"It's only us getting married," she signaled, as though he might need cheer.

When, man and wife, they faced the great assembly, she was still taking care of him; her arm pressed his for comfort, her gallant head was up for them both and her cheeks flew scarlet banners. She was so vivid, so sure of her path, that still few could look at Henry. Those who did looked through tears, and so saw past the plain face and awkward coat to the spirit within, manfully calm, reverent before its great hour.

The sidewalk crowd cheered and waved hats, and Mary, recognizing acquaintances, laughed and waved back from the motor. When a newsboy, bursting through to the curb, flung a shabby little bunch of violets through the window, the bride caught it neatly in one hand.

"Good shot, Mikey!" she sang out. She had not spoken before, and her voice released a roar of laughter. The crowd could see the humor of her looking like a princess and speaking like one of them. Henry smiled, too, and relaxed mightily, as though some awful fear had been lifted.

"I guess you're the same old Mary Healy," he said, covering her hand with his own.

"Mary Martin, I'd have you know," was the robust answer.

She was gay with relief that the ordeal was over. It seemed to her a comparatively easy thing to stand up with Henry under a canopy of roses, guarded by her mother and Mrs. Healy, and allow herself to be greeted; and, because she took it so simply, she bore herself well. When she met some stately dowager's congratulation with her air of sunny equality and a hearty "That's right!" or, "Sure thing!"—it was her strength and her poise that shone out, and touched eyes told Marise that she was a blessedly fortunate woman.

Marise knew it, glowingly. Her voice had a secret carol as she introduced "my daughter," "my son-in-law," "my little girl's adopted mother," and she welcomed Mary's and Henry's friends with a good will that left no barrier standing in all the moved assembly. Henry was quite silent, except when Mary looked round to cheer him, but Mrs. Healy, gigantic in purple satin, had a rich dignity that was monumental, and that reduced to

momentary triviality many a personage accounted of some weight. They made a quaint combination, the four, as quaint as the mixture of guests, but no one thought of that. The spell of some old fairy tale seemed to have fallen on the throng, for all talked and ate and drank together without fear or withholding. The apartment was filled to the doors, for not one person who was able to sit up had refused the invitation; and no one wanted to leave. When Mary had changed to her traveling gown, Marise had to draw her and Henry into the study and close the door for a quiet word.

They stood before her hand in hand, tired and happy, and she leaned back in her chair, smiling at them in silence until Mary impulsively knelt down beside her to kiss her hand.

"You're such a *peach*, mother!" she murmured.

Marise kept her there and nodded Henry to a chair.

"My children, there is one thing we have not talked about," she began, "and that is money." Mary looked up quickly to object, but a hand silenced her. "I know. You want to make your own way, do it yourselves. You have

both been very fine about that—I like it. But there is something you must know. Your father, Mary, left a good deal of money, but it was all spent in looking for you. Then, eight years later, my father's estate came to me, but so tied up that I could use only the income. It meant, of course, that there was no earthly hope left of finding you, and I had to accept that—outwardly. But every year I have deposited part of my income with a trust company in the name of Mary Jaffrey. The interest has been added to it, and now it is a very good sum—nearly sixty thousand dollars. It is yours, dear. If you don't want to take it now, you can leave it there indefinitely. But suppose Henry wanted his own printing shop: there is capital to begin on. I will take you down and introduce you, and after that it is wholly in your hands. No one will question what you do."

Mary had been bursting with suppressed protest until the printing shop was mentioned; then she obviously faltered.

"But, mother, what right have I to your money!" she cried. "You've got no comfort out of me! The minute I might have been of

some use to you, here I go off and get married. You haven't had any kind of a deal."

"Oh, haven't I!" Marise caressed the honest troubled face. "My dear, I have had so much that if you did not use the money, I should give it to charity for a thank offering. Why, Mary, I have found my baby!"

Mary put her arms about her mother's neck. "And you'll never lose her again, you bet," she whispered.

"And now," Marise went on, "there is just one thing more. What you two make of yourselves and your life is all in your own hands. You have a magnificent chance, and you can go as far as you will. A printer's business can grow to any extent—it can take on distinction and profit by scholarship. If you two choose to educate yourselves, it is in your power. You both have a great deal to learn—more than you know. If you want to learn it, the door is open."

Mary looked up into Henry's face, then answered gravely for them both: "We do, mother."

"Then I will help. Now run along and be happy!"

The bride and groom were sent off with cheers and showers of rose petals, and still the guests lingered. Marise, slipping up-stairs for a moment's rest, paused in the upper hall, and, putting aside the curtain, looked down over the little balcony into the drawing-room below. Hugh joined her there, and together they watched the guests.

The day's spirit still lay like a mellowing light on kindly faces. Mrs. Healy was seated regally on the couch between Mrs. Cadwalader Thayer and fussy, overdressed Mrs. Engel, with Doris and Evelyn Thayer and Cornelia Kent hovering as close as possible, all listening intently to the tale of Mary's first appearance at the farm. Marise's Cousin Sherman was expending his white-haired charm on three girls from Mary's office, Mrs. Osborne, the cushiony Luly of Marise's lonely years, was discussing grandchildren with Henry's shawled and gnarled Aunt Peggy, while Mr. Weeks brought them punch, and Alice Martindale, red-headed imp of seventeen and heiress to uncounted millions, flirted joyously in a corner with Mr. Peavy. Everybody loved everybody. Hugh and Marise, turning

to each other, smiled deeply, then let the curtain fall between them and the world.

"There really is something in it," Hugh said suddenly.

"In what, dear?"

"Oh, all you have been standing up for. Brotherhood. Love of fellow men. It's a good world, after all, when it gets a chance to be. And people are very decent when you know them. It is only when you don't know them that you want to throw stones." He had not realized that the acknowledgment would mean so much to her. Seeing that she was moved beyond speech, in danger of tears, he came quickly to her aid. "Peavy's an awfully nice chap, and I kissed Mrs. Healy," he confided.

THE END

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